7
GETTING THE WORD OUT

TOOLS FOR ENGAGING LANDOWNERS EFFECTIVELY
7 GETTING THE WORD OUT

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7.1 Achieving Multiple Touches

It is rare that a landowner will take a recommended action simply on the basis of one postcard, conversation, poster, or email. Behavior change usually occurs when a person hears about an issue and recommended actions a few times and, preferably, from different sources.

On average, it takes four to six interactions with your message to persuade someone to take an action. These “touches” can be a conversation or interaction, communication materials, or mentions in online or offline media. Some of these touches can be planned and delivered by you or your partners, and some could be fortuitous. The source, medium, and format of each touch; when it is received; and how it relates to previous touches all influence how your landowners respond to the message.

Consider, for example, landowner Jane, who has never encountered a service forester. One day, she gets a postcard in her mailbox inviting her to an event in her community where a service forester will answer basic questions about timber harvesting. She reads the postcard, considers attending the meeting, but tells herself she will decide later. A few days later, she reads an article in the local paper about how landowners in her area have rich timber resources but are often cheated of current and future earnings. The article mentions how foresters can help optimize timber earnings while preserving forest health. The next evening, she mentions the article and the event to her neighbor, who expresses an interest in going with her. When she goes back home, however, she realizes she’s misplaced the original postcard. Luckily, the next day, she receives another postcard urging her to attend the event and offering a phone number to learn more. This time, she makes the call and reserves seats for herself and her neighbor.

As this example illustrates, each exposure to campaign messages works cumulatively to increase the likelihood of action. This means that you should plan to deliver multiple “touches” to target audience members in a relatively short time frame (if touch #1 is forgotten by the time touch #2 happens, then you’re starting the process from the beginning).

To many natural resource professionals, delivering multiple touches sounds impossibly difficult. The solution is to think of landowner outreach as a series of discrete efforts designed to accomplish small goals. Imagine that your job is to encourage better stewardship by enrolling landowners in your state’s stewardship program. At that scale, planning to organize multiple touches for every landowner and then following up with interested landowners to deliver needed services probably requires more resources than you have. However, you can make the task manageable by setting targets for different locations and for different steps of your outreach.

For example, you might start with the goal of enrolling 30 people in a particular county. This allows you to focus your outreach efforts on a particular geography and target audience with enough specificity, intensity, and persistence to start engaging with 30 people in that county. Once that goal is met, you can move on to a different part of the state or focus on a different audience in the same area. Or you may decide that your outreach has generated enough qualified leads and you can spend the rest of the year deepening your relationship with these landowners and helping them implement good practices on their land.

It is more efficient to be goal-directed and focused in your outreach, so you can achieve the 4 to 6 touches needed to motivate landowners to take action. When the goal is broad or complex, it makes sense to break it up into several related outreach efforts, each targeting a specific audience, subgoal, or geography.
THINKING IN CAMPAIGNS

A campaign is a series of coordinated outreach activities designed to accomplish a specific outcome. An election candidate might conduct a campaign to achieve his or her election, an advocacy organization might conduct a campaign to promote desired laws or policies, and a company might conduct a marketing campaign to promote sales of its product. Your organization might conduct a campaign to increase riparian buffers along a local river, get landowners to put in firebreaks, get conservation easements on high-value lands, or simply get landowners to meet with their local foresters.

Campaigns are always goal-directed—i.e., they are implemented to bring about a specific outcome. In addition, they also have the following attributes:

- They involve more than one activity or event. Sending out one mailing or hosting one workshop doesn’t usually qualify as a campaign. In part, this is because it is extremely rare that a single activity or event will get any audience to take the desired action. A campaign seeks to accomplish desired outcomes via multiple audience touches.

- Campaign events and activities are intentional, planned, and coordinated. Different elements of the campaign—e.g., materials, events, activities—are designed to play different roles in motivating action. For example, you may use a postcard and some media coverage to raise awareness of an issue; then host a meeting to discuss possible solutions with landowners; then schedule “how to” workshops and demonstrations to empower interested landowners to take the desired action.

- Campaigns are usually time bound. They have a start date and an end date. They may also have different checkpoints along the way, with different milestones to be accomplished by specific dates.

The scale and scope of campaigns can vary. They may be fairly circumscribed (e.g., getting landowners to plant buffers along a small stream), or they may be long and complex with several subgoals and planned subcampaigns to accomplish them (e.g., improving water quality in the Chesapeake Bay). The key is to have a planned set of activities that build on each other, to move toward the goal in an intentional way.

Organizing your outreach activities into discrete campaigns offers many advantages:

- It allows you to be more targeted and, therefore, more effective and efficient. Knowing what you have planned in the future reduces pressure to try and include all needed information and all audience interests in a single postcard, email or presentation.

- It encourages you to devote sufficient time to all the steps of your Ladder of Engagement and ensure that you’re moving landowners toward the actions needed to accomplish your goals. You can first focus on bringing people into the program, and, once you have enough interested landowners, shift the focus to servicing them and supporting action.

- Thinking of ongoing outreach as a series of goal-directed efforts is also more rewarding for the team and encourages more learning and innovation. Each milestone that is met is cause to celebrate, and each new subcampaign is an opportunity to incorporate learnings from previous efforts to do a better job.

- Finally, this iterative process of accomplishing a goal, learning from the process, and then moving on to the next target is more motivating to staff than simply “doing landowner outreach” in an ongoing and repetitive way.
Once you have decided what you want to say to your audience, you must decide how you expose your audience to your message with sufficient intensity to motivate them to take action. Here are a few considerations for planning how to get your message to landowners.

**WHAT MATERIALS AND CHANNELS TO USE**

Common media to deliver messages to landowners include brochures, postcards, letters, posters, presentations, websites, and social media. Each of these has its own pros and cons. In choosing among them, consider the following:

- **How much information can the medium carry?** A postcard, for example, can hold very little content. It is an excellent way to introduce an idea and get people interested in learning more. On the flip side, a website can be very content rich, but it may be useless unless you have good ways to drive your audience to it. Different media serve different purposes in your outreach. In general, consider using simpler materials, such as postcards, as “hooks” to engage people in content-rich materials, such as workshops or websites.

- **How targeted is the medium?** Some media—such as letters and phone calls—can be finely targeted to specific landowners. Others—such as newspaper articles and billboards—are more general and will likely reach many people beyond your target audience. In general, combining the two types of media delivers the best results. Getting your program, organization, or issue mentioned in local media raises its profile and creates an environment where personalized messages such as emails or letters are more likely to be opened, read, and believed. Using a gardening analogy, think of media coverage as fertilizing the soil to increase the chances that the seeds you plant will germinate and thrive.

**WHO SHOULD DELIVER THE MESSAGE**

When people get the same advice from more than one person or organization, they are more likely to consider it seriously. Enlisting influential individuals and partner organizations to promote, endorse, or reinforce your message helps achieve more repetition. It also increases the perceived acceptance and credibility of your program and its message. Recruiting more unusual or surprising messengers (e.g., a church leader supporting a stewardship practice) can also add to the salience and impact of your message.

Of course, the credibility of these messengers makes a difference, and it is important to realize that different types of landowners may consider different messengers more or less credible. We know, for example, that Woodland Retreat Owners assign high value to a professional’s training and expertise, while Working the Land owners are more likely to trust people who live in the community and work the land as they do (see Section 4.3: The TELE Landowner Types). Think carefully about your audience’s preferences, and use and cite sources who are credible for your target audience.

**THE BEST TIME TO CONDUCT OUTREACH**

How well people attend to your message and how persuaded they are depends, in part, on when people see and hear your message and what is on their minds at the time. Some of the contextual factors that affect how a message is processed are outside your control. But there are many things you can do to get your message to people when they are most likely to attend to it. For example:

- Send information about specific practices just prior to the time of year when people should be doing them.
- Use postcards and letters mainly as hooks to encourage people to seek more information. That way, they can access the more detailed information when they’re ready to attend to it.
- Tie your information to local events or news items that are on people’s minds.
My Wisconsin Woods (MWW) is a public-private partnership that has successfully reached thousands of unengaged woodland owners who have subsequently taken action to become more engaged with the management of their woodlands. MWW’s relationship with these woodland owners was initiated through direct mail, sustained through e-communications and periodic mailings, and supported by a website. Thanks to the large number of landowners on its mailing list (140,000), MWW was able to try different approaches and sequences of mailings for subsets of landowners in its database. This strategy included sending different messages (such as those with a financial versus a wildlife focus), sending different offers (information versus forester visit), varying the timing (seasonal), and concentrating on different geographic areas. The key to MWW’s learning, and its ability to incorporate the learning into subsequent outreach efforts, is a landowner database that it rigorously maintains.

Through diligent tracking of direct-mail efforts and landowner responses, MWW was able to learn a lot about its materials, offers, and timing, and thus was able to gather many useful insights about different aspects of direct mail. It used four waves of mailings to engage landowners who were new to the organization and its programs. The first was an introductory postcard designed to build awareness and familiarity. The following three included offers (either for information or a site visit) that required a response. The offers that required a response included a postcard with a business reply envelope, an enveloped letter with a reply mailer, and another quad-fold postcard with an additional promotion. All these materials were of high quality and similarly branded to promote awareness and credibility.

Overall response rates to offers of a free publication were around 20 percent, and for a free property visit, response rates were around 5 to 10 percent. When the landowner publication was included in the first mailing, the response to the second mailing offering a free property visit was higher. Overall, these response rates are quite high compared to the usual rates for direct mail campaigns (0.5 to 2.5 percent).

In MWW’s campaign, across all offers and messages, it found that the highest response rates were achieved the second time an offer was presented. In addition, it found that a good rule of thumb for sending the next wave of mailers is to wait until the response from the previous piece has dropped. MWW determined that the first mailing—i.e., the introductory postcard—was helpful but not essential. Similarly, the last mailing (presenting the offer for the third time) increased the response rate by a very small amount, about 1 percent. MWW suggests that these can be dropped if your budget is limited.
7.3 Reaching Landowners via Direct Mail

Direct mail includes a broad range of printed pieces—enveloped letters, folded mailers, and large- and small-format postcards—that are mailed directly to target audience members.

WHEN TO USE DIRECT MAIL

Direct mail is an excellent tool to reach specific members of your target audience and track their responses. However, response rates to unsolicited mail from relatively unknown organizations are fairly low, and you should plan to send multiple mailings with consistency of offer, message, and branding to build recognition, trust, and conversion.

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<th>CONS ▼</th>
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<tr>
<td>• You can target individual recipients (e.g., woodland owners on tax rolls, forestry program participants).</td>
<td>• Can be expensive, especially if you have to pay for a custom mailing list and are planning multiple mailings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• You can easily track the response rate.</td>
<td>• Mailing lists may need to be cleaned up and filtered before use.</td>
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<td>• If you send multiple mailings, you can generally assume that landowners are aware of your offer and lack of response signals lack of interest.</td>
<td>• Response rates on mail campaigns are typically low, about 1 to 4 percent.</td>
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<td>• The mailout can be scaled to match your budget or response capacity.</td>
<td>• Unsolicited communications are considered junk mail and almost half are never opened.</td>
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<td>• If designed well, multiple waves of direct mail can increase brand awareness and credibility, even among non-respondents.</td>
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HOW TO GET GOOD RESULTS

- Direct mail works best when you have a good mailing list of people who are capable of acting on your offer and (hopefully) interested in doing so. Using existing contacts is easiest but doesn’t reach new audiences.

- If possible, use first and last names of the recipients both in the address and in the salutation.

- While more expensive, first-class postage reaches more people, with address correction and forwarding, and is more likely to be opened. Because undelivered mail is returned to the sender, first-class postage will also help you track your response rate more accurately and update your mailing list.

- Direct mail pieces typically have a few seconds (“between the mailbox and the trash can”) to get and hold the audience’s attention. Therefore, they need to be well designed. Moreover, the quality of the mail piece often influences the audience’s opinion of the quality of the program or service that you’re offering.

- People give mail pieces only a quick read. So keep your offer simple and singular, and focus on the benefits rather than the details. Complex or multiple offers cloud the recipient’s decision-making. Complicated response methods create unnecessary barriers to act.

- Response rates grow substantially when people receive your messages multiple times within a finite time frame. Mailings should be spaced close enough together to evoke memory of the prior mailing, but far enough apart to provide a needed reminder. Two weeks is often a good interval between mailings. Three or four mailings in succession usually evoke the best response, especially if they are timed well, similarly branded, and reaffirm the offer. Multiple mailings can heighten the importance of an impending deadline.

- Time your mailing to match the audience’s interest and receptivity. For example, a good time to offer a forester walk-through might be in either spring or fall, when landowners are excited to be on their land. Likewise, avoid heavy mail periods, such as the holidays or election times, unless you can relate your offer to the mood or activities of those occasions.

METRICS TO ASSESS DIRECT MAIL CAMPAIGNS

- Responses received in total and as a percentage of pieces mailed

- Cost of mailing campaign in total and per individual exposed to the message

- Cost per respondent (i.e., total cost of mailings divided by the number of people who take the desired action)

- Variation in response rates per mailing within a multiple-wave mailing campaign
**7.4 Reaching Landowners via Local Media**

Local media refers to placement of campaign messages or related stories in newspapers, radio channels, or TV programs associated with specific geographic communities (local, regional, or statewide). This placement can be free, or you can purchase media spots. Placement can also be customized to reach specific audiences.

**WHEN TO USE LOCAL MEDIA**

Local media works well to promote a one-time event, such as a local meeting—perhaps to kick-start your program or campaign. It is also ideal for creating broad awareness of an issue or your program. Consequently, it works well in conjunction with other channels designed to directly communicate with your desired audience (e.g., direct mail, phone calls, etc.). Local media can create familiarity, credibility, and a positive orientation, which increase the response rate to direct asks (e.g., by mail or in person). It also helps by creating a social norm—even the people who don’t take action may have learned something from the media coverage, and they may encourage others to take action.

By itself, local media is not a very good mechanism to inspire behavior change, in part, because it is not suited for reaching people in a targeted way. As your target audience or target behavior gets more specific, local media will be more appropriate as a supplement to more targeted marketing.

Finally, note that broad publicity about your program is not always a good thing. In some (albeit rare) cases, raising awareness about an issue or program can solidify opposition and result in more competing or contradictory messages. If that backlash is possible, you should not use local media. Instead, stay under the radar and work in more targeted ways to influence your landowners.

### PROS

- Local media are widely available in most areas.
- They are not hard to access. Editors like developing storylines about programs that benefit their readers or the community at large.
- They are a good way to create broad visibility and brand awareness. Media coverage adds to the credibility of your organization and program.
- Local media coverage increases audience receptivity to more specific channels, such as door-to-door or direct mail.

### CONS

- Paid media spots can be expensive.
- Unless you’re purchasing media spots, you have limited control over when and where your message will appear.
- There is no guarantee that members of your target audience will see the message.
- Many people who are not in your target audience may also see the message. They may then contact you for unrelated information or services.
- It is difficult to connect broadcast media to individual requests or behavior change. You can ask people how they heard about you, but that is often not accurate, especially if you’ve used multiple channels.
HOW TO GET GOOD RESULTS

- Local media works well when you can tie your project and desired landowner actions to broad issues that concern the general public. This makes the story more attractive to media publishers and more relevant to readers and viewers.

- Rather than sending out a press release, take some time to work with your local media staff to shape and develop a story that is relevant to their readers and makes the key points that you want to convey. One well-written story that places your program in context and describes its benefits is more impactful than several announcements in local papers.

- Response rates to a media call to attend a meeting will be much higher if the meeting is about a timely or controversial issue.

- Local media is a more efficient channel when there is a lot of overlap between your target audience and the viewers and readers of that specific channel. If most of the media viewers and readers are not members of your target audience, not only is this outreach channel inefficient, but it can also lead to irrelevant calls from unqualified prospects.

METRICS TO ASSESS LOCAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

- Number of media impressions (i.e., number of readers or viewers reached)

- Proportion of media impressions that are target audience members (this information may be available from the media outlet, depending on how your audience is defined)

- Cost per individual reached

- Cost per respondent
Phones calls include calling people who are already acquainted with your organization and have given you permission to call them. The method also includes calling people who don’t know your organization (and whose contact information you may have purchased or acquired from a partner organization).

WHEN TO USE PHONE CALLS

Phone calls are a one-on-one personal interaction capable of deepening relationships and commitments to act. Calling people who are already engaged with your organization is a great way to demonstrate customer service and care in an ongoing relationship. But expectations for phone calls should be checked against the depth of the relationship. Cold-calling contacts can be effective for introducing a program, informing people about an event or resource, and getting permission for more detailed interactions (e.g., sending more information or setting up a meeting). Phone calls rarely result in real action commitments. In any case, given people’s wariness of phone solicitations, persistence may be necessary to get people on the phone and overcome their skepticism sufficiently to advance the relationship.

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| • Cold-calling can be a good channel for delivering personalized information and persuading people to take action.  
• The method is also good for forging and improving relationships with landowners. This is a great way to follow up with existing customers, learn more about them, strengthen the relationship, and increase their interest in what you offer.  
• If you are buying a telemarketing list, you can customize it to get people who more closely resemble your target audience.  
• This is a great first step to soliciting buy-in and assistance from a few “high-value” landowners who can help jumpstart your program. | • Cold-call telemarketing has a negative perception and can elicit a negative response from audience members.  
• Telemarketing lists can be expensive and may not be up to date.  
• Many people do not answer phone calls from numbers that they don’t know.  
• This channel does not reach people with unlisted phone numbers. |
HOW TO GET GOOD RESULTS

• A personal phone call is best placed after at least one high-quality interaction, preferably a face-to-face meeting. If the recipient has provided you their phone number, a call may even be expected and appreciated. A timely follow-up call can reinforce and advance your previous conversation and increase the landowner’s commitment to working with you.

• Cold calling can be effective if your offer is well tailored to the needs of the people you’re calling. For example, if you are offering landowners a management plan that qualifies them for tax benefits, you will have a higher success rate by calling landowners who have recently requested information about tax programs than if you’re just calling landowners in general.

• The success of a phone conversation, especially a cold call, depends on the quality of your script. Your script should include, for example, a greeting and introduction, what qualified them as a contact for you or some reference point, the benefits of your services, and a transition to a question to engage the landowner in dialogue. The script should also anticipate and accommodate different landowners’ needs and the different directions the conversation might take, including addressing landowners’ questions and concerns. The script should be well rehearsed so that the caller can work it into a casual and comfortable conversation.

• It is very important to be realistic about what can be accomplished in the first phone call. Phone calls, especially cold calls, are for starting the relationship and perhaps securing an expression of interest. They are not sufficient to accomplish behavior change. Getting a landowner to agree to a meeting or take a first step, such as accept materials from your organization, is a great result. Be prepared to offer these specific action steps to interested landowners.

• While this differs by audience, phone calls are generally more successful on Thursdays, Wednesdays, and Tuesdays—in that order—with Mondays and Fridays best avoided. Early morning and evening are often the best times to reach people at home.

• Understand that the vast majority of people will either not answer their phones or not want to speak with you. Be prepared for that and don’t take it personally. It is important to stay positive and enthusiastic, because those emotions are communicated to landowners in your voice.

METRICS TO ASSESS PHONE CAMPAIGNS

• Response rates as a total number and percentage of calls placed
• Percentage of calls that lead to qualified respondents (i.e., people who fit your target audience)
• Percentage of calls that lead to favorable responses
• Cost per respondent (i.e., total cost of phone campaign divided by the number of respondents who take the desired action)
7.6 Reaching Landowners via Email

This category includes a broad range of messages delivered by electronic means, including personal emails, group messages, e-newsletters, and e-magazines. In addition, emails offer the option to link to other electronic media, such as websites and event sign-ups. The audience for these communications could be one person or many.

WHEN TO USE EMAIL

Email is one of the most efficient communication channels in terms of return on dollars invested. Provided your audience is connected to the Internet and is comfortable with online media, email is a great way to reach people quickly and drive them to your website or make specific offers. It can be used to grow brand awareness, generate leads, and broadcast information in a timely way. It is also a great way to test different offers, because it can be tracked and results are available fairly quickly.

Because email is inexpensive, it tends to be overused. As a result, people are directing more and more email to their trash or spam folders.

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<tr>
<td>• Email is an inexpensive and scalable mechanism; it’s good for maintaining contact with large audiences. It’s also good for building brand awareness and/or demonstrating expertise (even if the email is seen and not acted upon).</td>
<td>• Emails are not a reliable way to reach audiences. It is common to see open rates of only 10 to 20 percent.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Email offers the opportunity for immediate, timely, and ongoing communication. Events and deadlines are easily promoted.</td>
<td>• It is time consuming to generate consistent, quality content that will enable your emails to stand out from the deluge of emails that most people now receive daily.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Electronic communications can be seamlessly integrated across all electronic devices, phones, tablets, and computers.</td>
<td>• Email needs to be handled skillfully. Too much electronic communication can damage customers’ perceptions of your organization or agency. On the other hand, if communication is too sporadic, the audience might view the organization as inconsistent.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Emails can carry a decent amount of content. More importantly, they can be used to drive traffic to more detailed information, e.g., on your website.</td>
<td>• This is not a good channel to find new customers. You need to build your own list of people expecting your content. Buying lists and sending unsolicited emails will increase the chances of your emails being blacklisted and sent to the spam folder.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Content of electronic communications is easily shared through peer networks.</td>
<td>• Tracking use and patterns is easy (through opens, clicks, and unsubscribes).</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Because emails are inexpensive and immediate, it is very easy to test responses to different messages.</td>
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HOW TO GET GOOD RESULTS

- The success of email as a channel depends on a foundation of contacts who have opted in to receiving emails from your organization. Be committed to building those contacts honestly and over time. Do not try to short-circuit this process by purchasing email lists, many of which are compiled fraudulently. Although anti-spam laws technically apply to commercial activity, there is no specific exemption for nonprofits. Sending unsolicited emails damages your organization’s credibility and may even earn you a hefty fine.

- Maintenance of the email list over time is also an important consideration. On average, 25 percent of your email list expires each year. It is good practice to provide an unsubscribe option to readers. If a lot of people mark your emails as spam, it damages your credibility score, a factor that spam filters use to identify spam. If your credibility score falls low enough to trigger common spam filters, even people who want to read your emails may never see them.

- It is good practice to have a series of emails that are sent out automatically when new customers sign up to receive communications. These emails should carry some of your more compelling information or offers to demonstrate value to them immediately.

- Research shows personalization increases email effectiveness. Emails can be personalized even with large distribution lists, pulling names from a database for the greeting. Likewise, the sender can be personalized for a given list of contacts to increase likelihood of opens and clicks through e-newsletter software.

- Subject lines should be 15 words or fewer and should not contain words that may trigger spam filters (e.g., “free,” “amazing,” “this isn’t a scam,” etc.) or are purposely deceptive (e.g., “you have won”).

- Although email seems to be a less formal medium, take care to develop meaningful content and present it in an attractive format. Simple mistakes that otherwise would have been eliminated through proofreading reflect poorly on the quality of your content and offers.

- Your emails will be much better received if you are able to tailor them to be relevant to audience members. As an example, if you’re sending a second email to ask people to take some action (e.g., fill out a survey), send that reminder to people who have not yet taken that action. And send a “thank you” email to those who have.

- Consistency in the format, sender, and other elements makes your emails instantly recognizable and works to build your brand among list recipients. Every email should allow readers to click through to your website and should have brief subject headers that follow a similar format. E-newsletters should directly link to relevant information on your website. Any call to action should be clear and should be prominently placed near the top of the email.

- It is important to test your emails on a variety of devices (computers, laptops, tablets, and phones) and operating systems to make sure your messages are clear and attractive in different formats.

BALANCING LIST QUALITY AND SIZE

Email lists are compiled slowly, by harvesting emails from every online, phone, or in-person contact with members of your target audience. You can also post offers on forums, newsletters, or social media sites where audience members are likely to be; the idea is to get them to contact you and give you permission to email them.

How you collect, manage, and use email addresses influences the quality of your list. For example, a pop-up on your website that promotes your e-newsletter is a great way to actively acquire email addresses from potential customers. However, you might choose for a “double opt-in” by sending an email to everyone who signs up on the website, asking them to confirm receipt. This additional opt-in lowers the number of contacts acquired by about 20 to 30 percent, but it builds a higher quality list of contacts by weeding out bogus email addresses.
METRICS TO ASSESS EFFECTIVENESS OF EMAIL CAMPAIGNS

Indicators of the quality of your list

- Your bounce rate is the total percentage of your emails that were unsuccessfully delivered. When your bounce rate is more than 5 to 10 percent, it’s time to update your list.
- Delivery rate is the inverse of bounce rate. It is total emails sent minus those that bounced, divided by the total emails sent. This should be around 95 percent.
- Your spam complaint rate reflects the number of email recipients who marked your email as spam. This rate should be very, very low; corrective measures should be taken if it is 1 percent or higher.
- Your list growth rate is the number of new email addresses acquired per time period. You will need at least a 25 percent growth rate just to counter attrition due to opt outs and abandoned email addresses.

Indicators of audience engagement and response

- Your open rate (the percentage of the total emails opened by recipients) and click-through rate (the percentage of people who clicked a link in your email) are important indicators of how well your audience is engaging using the email content.
- Your share rate is the percentage of people who forward the email to a friend.
- Conversion rate is the percentage of email recipients who take desired actions. If the desired action was a donation or a purchase, you can also compute revenue per email.
- Your unsubscribe rate is the percentage of people who opt out of receiving your emails in the future.
7.7 Reaching Landowners via Social Media

Social media refers to a broad collection of interactive technologies and platforms that allow people to share ideas, photos, information, games, or assessments with peers. It includes blogs, social networks, platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, online gaming, and sites that support collaboration and information sharing. Social media platforms allow for user-generated content and interactivity and facilitate connections and networks among users.

WHEN TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA

The use of social media in forestry is relatively new, but catching on fast. With more and more people—including rural and older people—now on social media platforms, this channel can be a useful way to keep your community connected and sustain attention on your issue. Social media is more suited to sustaining existing affiliations than creating new ones. However, if you have a truly compelling offer, advertising on social media platforms can help you reach a new audience. Similarly, truly extraordinary content may be shared by audience members, thereby expanding your reach.

### PROS ▲

- Social media is an inexpensive and scalable mechanism; it is good for maintaining contact with a community of interested and engaged people.
- Social media offers the opportunity for immediate, timely, and ongoing communication.
- It fosters peer connections, which can be an important factor in keeping people engaged and active in your program.
- In rare cases, advertising a compelling offer on social media or placing “shareable” compelling content can attract a host of new constituents to your network. But you will need to work hard to translate these “clicks” into sustained interest.

### CONS ▼

- Creating a steady stream of attention-getting content that stands out from the competition is time consuming and requires specialized expertise.
- Constantly rolling, transient “feeds” make this a relatively unreliable way to reach an audience—people may or may not see your post, depending on when they check their feed.
- Social media is most effective when it generates interaction among users. This is very difficult to initiate and sustain.
- Social media elicits fragmented and momentary attention. It is not a good medium for in-depth conversations or education.
- Social media platforms are not a very targeted medium. Your social media ads and posts will probably reach many people who are not in your target audience. Conversely, it is hard to know which platforms audience members frequent or how many of them will follow you on a particular platform.
HOW TO GET GOOD RESULTS

• Social media commands shallow, fragmented attention. So keep your message short. Be clear about what you want to convey, and do that in a direct and immediate manner.

• Visually rich information is better. On social media, pictures (and videos) speak a lot louder than words.

• Use this medium as part of an integrated mix of channels in a way that plays on its strengths. For example, social media is good for inviting people to events or conveying a quick, eye-catching factoid or video that keeps people connected to your organization or issue. People who are browsing their Facebook or Twitter feeds are usually not in a frame of mind to click through to a detailed, substantive article on a particular issue.

• Meet people on the channels and platforms where they are. It is very difficult to persuade audience members to sign up to a new platform, even if that provides customized functionality or a better user experience.

METRICS TO ASSESS EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

• Number of followers—i.e., people who have given you permission to speak to them

• Cost per respondent for social media campaigns—i.e., the total cost of your ad campaign divided by the number of people who contacted you as a result of that campaign

• Overlap between your social media audience and participation in your programs—e.g., proportion of people who “follow” you online and attend workshops, request informational materials, or take other suggested actions