

# 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.**

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### 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.