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**Public Service Announcements for Broadcast Television: A Guide for
Non-Profit Agencies**

by
Karen Anne Jess

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree of The Graduate School
at Rowan University
June 2000

Approved by _____
Professor

Date Approved 6-27-00

ABSTRACT

Karen Anne Jess

Public Service Announcements for Broadcast Television: A Guide for Non-Profit Agencies. 2000. Advisor: Dr. Donald Bagin. Seminar in Public Relations, Graduate, Division of Rowan University.

The purpose of preparing this guide was to create a reference for non-profit agencies to assist in creating a public service announcement for broadcast television. The author assumed that non-profit agencies are often working with no budget and the quality of the prepared PSAs is unacceptable. Also, the techniques used to create and distribute the announcements are incorrect. Since public service announcements are key to reaching a large audience for little or no money, the author felt it essential to create a reference for non-profit agencies, to guide them in the production of their public service announcements. The primary research methods of this study were interviews with 50 television stations in the United States, pre-existing literature about public service announcements as well as internet searches on the topic. It includes the basics of preparing public service announcements for broadcast television. This guide is intended as a tool for non-profit agencies to produce public service announcements that will be accepted by television stations and given appropriate airtime.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Karen Anne Jess

**Public Service Announcements for
Broadcast Television: A Guide for Non-
Profit Agencies. 2000. Advisor: Dr. Donald
Bagin. Seminar in Public Relations,
Graduate, Division of Rowan University.**

This guide is intended to assist non-profit agencies with the creation and distribution of public service announcements for broadcast television. It addresses station requirements, positive and negative PSA components and issues such as corporate sponsorship and celebrities featured in the announcements.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks to the cooperating television stations who took the time to entertain my questions.

Thanks to Dr. Bagin for his endless guidance and dedication to his students.

Thanks most of all to my parents, Carol and Scott Jess, for their continuous support and encouragement throughout my life.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Public relations practitioners rely on public service announcements to effectively make their causes known to the public. Public service announcements are aimed at the community and focus on events, problems and organizations associated with everyday activities and life.

Broadcast television, while not required anymore to put aside free time for the airing of public service announcements, does in fact offer free time for these announcements on their stations. However, the time offered for the announcements is often late at night while the viewing audience is low.

Public service announcements generally are non-profit and in turn, the funding for these announcements is often little to none. This is why the quality of a final product of a public service announcement is often mediocre and unprofessional. Time and money are often wasted on the production of a poor public service announcement. Public relations practitioners usually do not have the budget to repeatedly reproduce these announcements for acceptance on broadcast television. How then can the public relations firms effectively get their message out to the publics? What is the most effective method to create a public service announcement for broadcast television? Who at the broadcast stations determines which public service announcement will air? What constitutes a

“good” public service announcement? The answers to these questions seem to be the barrier that keeps public relations practitioners from successfully creating and producing a “good” public service announcement for broadcast television.

Need

Traditionally, time donated by broadcast television stations was free and available for the broadcast of public service announcements. However, this time may be threatened if larger charities begin to pay for their service announcements. Now, public relations firms must produce better quality public service announcements to “out-do” the charities that are paying broadcast stations to air their spots that are also probably professionally produced. Also, many public service groups made a policy to “...not buy air time because [they] were afraid [they] would lose the free air time.”¹ Commitment is crucial for the public relations practitioners and their public service announcements. Quality must reach above and beyond other PSAs, and the broadcast television stations must recognize this quality and offer free airtime to the non-paying organizations. How then, does a public relations practitioner produce a superb public service announcement and out-do paying organizations? The answer lies in the study to follow.

Communication-consulting companies are available to help in the evaluation of both the production and distribution aspects of public service announcements. Charity officials overwhelmingly blame the FCC for the increased competition for free broadcast time to air public service announcements. In 1984, the commission dropped its guidelines for public service advertisements as part of its efforts to deregulate the broadcast

¹ Susan Islam, director of broadcasting and advertising, American Cancer Society. “PSA Bibliography – Tough Competition for Free Television Time Leads Charities to Weigh Paid Commercials.” <http://www.psaresearch.com/bib4705.html>

industry. It scrapped standards for the content of PSAs and eliminated a requirement that broadcasters issue reports detailing their daily broadcast schedules. “Those changes have made it difficult to monitor exactly where and when PSAs are aired.”²

Public relations firms often produce their public service announcements in-house in a makeshift television production studio. While the quality of the PSAs produced could be equal to the quality of the PSAs produced by large paying corporation, the public service announcement could be a failure as well. The difference between which announcement gets airtime on the broadcast stations and which does not still remains a mystery. Many different broadcast stations may have different opinions about what the components of a public service announcement should be. But, the core standards should remain the same. So, what are these standards? Are public relations firms simply producing public service announcements including elements that they *think* the broadcast television stations want to see? Are the firms simply wasting money they do not have? What is the most effective way to produce a public service announcement with no funding and successfully get it a slot on broadcast television?

Right now, many public relations agencies are “...looking for ways to get access air time, because the PSA system as it stands now is very hit or miss.”³ This method of “hit or miss” is very costly and uncertain. Public relations agencies certainly do not have the funding for public service announcements to try a “hit or miss” approach to getting their announcements broadcast airtime.

² Charity Officials. “PSA Bibliography – Tough Competition for Free Television Time Leads Charities to Weigh Paid Commercials.” <http://www.psaresearch.com/bib4705.html>

³ Elaine Chapnick, director of creative services for the American Lung Association. “PSA Bibliography – Tough Competition for Free Television Time Leads Charities to Weigh Paid Commercials.” <http://www.psaresearch.com/bib4705.html>

Generally, when a public service announcement is sent to an individual station “the broadcasters screen the advertisements to insure that they comply with their PSA requirements.”⁴ But, what are the requirements that need to be included in a public service announcement? Are these requirements available for public relations agencies to view to make the most of their public service announcement funding?

Some public service announcements sent to broadcast stations “...are only aired during junk time, very late in the evening and early AM.”⁵ Public relations agencies should not be wasting valuable funding on their public service announcements simply to have them aired during “junk” times on broadcast television.

A study and guide conducted, created and presented to assist public relations agencies and other non-profit organizations in the successful airing of their public service announcements on broadcast television would be beneficial.

Purpose

The intent of writing this guide was to provide public relations agencies and practitioners with a resource to refer to when producing public service announcements for broadcast television. A brief historical analysis of the Federal Communications Commissions’ rules and regulations regarding broadcast television and public service announcements will first be supplied.

Areas focused upon were (1) What constitutes “good” public service announcements for broadcast television? (2) A detailed representation of the components and requirements for public service announcements for broadcast television. (3) Who is

⁴ Elizabeth Klein. “PSA Bibliography – Tough Competition for Free Television Time Leads Charities to Weigh Paid Commercials.” <http://www.psaresearch.com/bib4705.html>

the final decision-maker for choosing public service announcements for broadcast? (4) What factors are involved in the decision-making process? (5) Is the choosing of public service announcements simply a corporate decision? (6) What can broadcast stations gain from airing public service announcements?

Importance

There are no full texts published for the sole purpose of containing guides for public service announcements for broadcast television. Public relations practitioners simply produce a public service announcement that seems to be complete and professional. Practitioners should be offered a guide to assist them in their production of a successful public service announcement for broadcast television.

This guide provides a complete and current guide for public relations practitioners to use when creating and producing a public service announcement for broadcast television. Public relations agencies will be confident that their public service announcement will meet the standards to gain network approval for airtime. "Getting [a] TV PSA cleared by the major broadcast networks is a critical part of the distribution plan."⁶

This guide should offer all applicable standards and procedures for components of a successful broadcast television public service announcement. This guide will eliminate or greatly decrease apprehension, questions and the waste of public relations funds on public service announcements due to poor production from lack of knowledge.

⁵ Bill Goodwill, chairman, Partners in Public Service National Broadcast Association for Community Affairs Conference. – "How You Can Use Evaluation Data To Fine-Tune Your PSA Program." <http://www.psaresearch.com/bib4401.html>

Glossary of Terms

Affiliate Station – A smaller station that is derived from a larger network

Airtime - The time that a radio or television station is broadcasting. Also called **airspace**.

Billboard – An announcement identifying a sponsor at the beginning or end of a program.

Broadcast Television - Transmission of a radio or television program or signal for public use.

Call-to-Action – Offering a contact name, phone number, address or website in the public service-announcement

Dayparts – Segments of the television broadcast day. These include:

Early Morning: 5:00am-9:00am

Daytime: 9:00am-4:00pm

Early Fringe: 4:00pm-8:00pm

Primetime: 8:00pm-10:00pm

Late Evening: 10:00pm-1:00am

Late Night: 1:00am-5:00am

Demographic – Information about an audience. Includes: age, race, gender, marital status, etc.

FCC – Federal Communication Commission

Flight – A period of consecutive days or weeks of advertising within an overall ad campaign.

Frequency – The number of times the target audience will be exposed to a message.

In-House Production -Conducted within, coming from, or being within an organization or group: an in-house computer system; in-house counsel; an in-house newsletter.

⁶ Bill Goodwill. Partners in Public Service. "PSA Bibliography – Network Clearance A Producer's Checklist." <http://www.psaresearch.com/bib3001.html>

O & O Station - A station owned and operated by a network.

Psychographic – A term that describes consumers or audience members on the basis of some psychological trait or characteristic or behavior – values, attitudes or lifestyles.

PSA – public service announcement – A service performed for the benefit of the public, especially by a nonprofit organization.

Reach – The number of different people who will be exposed to an advertiser’s message.

Roadblock – Scheduling PSAs on a few different stations to air at the same time. No matter which station viewers turn to, they will see the same PSA

Script - A copy of a text used by a director or performer

Spot – Another term for a public service announcement

Storyboard – The layout for a television advertisement, showing the action and copy in frames.

Limitations

This guide does not teach public relations practitioners or non-profit agencies how to interact with contacts at broadcast television stations to gain entry for a particular public service announcement. This guide does not teach production skills for the staff creating and producing public service announcements for broadcast television.

Because the position of the decision-makers at broadcast television stations does change from time to time, the criteria for a “good” or “bad” public service announcement may differ from the criteria listed in this study. Although many of the criteria for PSAs will remain the same over time personnel changes may prompt policy changes for public service announcements

Therefore, this guide does not claim to be the all knowing of criteria and history of public service announcements for broadcast television, but does offer current tips and guidelines on creating successful public service announcements for broadcast television.

Benefits

This guide offers public relations practitioners a step by step guide to producing a successful public service announcement for broadcast television. It offers suggestions on successful contacting techniques for broadcast television stations. It suggests production techniques that will save the public relations agencies and other non-profit organizations from wasteful production spending. No longer do public relations practitioners need to blindly send public service announcements to broadcast television stations in hopes to access some airtime. This guide offers suggested strategies and techniques to save time, money and gain public understanding regarding what the public service announcement is about.

CHAPTER II: RELATED LITERATURE

Information about public service announcements was difficult to find for this study. Although many keywords were used in many variations during the author's search for information about public service announcements, a dearth of research information was found.

Related literature about the subject was found by the author in the Rowan University Library, on the World Wide Web, in books provided by Rowan University professors pertaining to the issue and from the author's personal library of information. **World Wide Web – Providing Broadcast Television in the Public Interest.**

“Current efforts to provide broadcasting in the public interest has brought forth what we know as public service announcements (PSA).”⁷ PSAs were presented in the past as fulfillment of Federal Communications Commission rules that designated broadcasting corporations as trustees of the airwaves. However, the Federal Communications Commission no longer regulates the use of public service announcements by broadcast television stations. It is up to the conscience of the individual station to fulfill community responsibility.

⁷ Media Safe. The All-Service Media. <http://www.mediasafe.org>

Topics for public service announcements can be jobs, immigration, legal aid, shelter, health, disabilities, mentoring, pregnancy, after school programs, mental illness, food assistance, drugs and drug counseling, and a host of other caregiver related topics. Public service announcements create a forum to expose more areas of information that facilitate self-help for groups of Americans who are currently under-informed.⁸

Public service announcements share information that can be, and is, used by all citizens as a means to direct help information to those in need. Programs offered through PSAs benefit across all economic and social levels. Public service announcements should offer information to citizens and expand community awareness.⁹

Networks are increasingly linking public service announcements to formats and placing them in time slots that are associated with network programming. This makes it increasingly difficult to target specific messages in PSA formats to time slots watched by the particular ages and demographics of the target audiences.¹⁰

For many organizations, public service announcements are a critical vehicle for fund raising, volunteer recruitment, and public education. Officials say they are willing to try paid broadcast time, even at the risk of losing the free time allotted to them as non-profit organizations. They feel the free time they are getting is too limited and increasingly regulated to hours of low viewership.¹¹

Many non-profit organizations are looking to improve the quality of their public service announcements. Elaine Chapnick of the American Lung Association says that

⁸ Media Safe. Mission Statement. <http://www.mediasafe.org/mediamission.htm>

⁹ Media Safe. Carol J. Naff, community outreach manager, DCTV Denver, CO. <http://www.mediasafe.org/mediastreet.htm>

¹⁰ Fact Sheet: \$175 million paid ad campaign. <http://www.ncjrs.org/factshee.htm>

¹¹ Elizabeth Klein. PSA Bibliography. "Tough Competition for Free Television Time Leads Charities to Weigh Paid Commercials." <http://www.psaresearch.com/bib4705.html>

organizations are looking for ways to get access airtime, because the PSA system as it stands now is very hit or miss.¹²

Public service time is something that, according to government regulations, all radio and television stations should contribute. While the time they give is not “prime time,” it still provides a good opportunity to get messages across to many viewers.

Public service announcements should not be a chore for the organization or the broadcaster. Jerry Watson, general manager of KTTC-TV in Rochester, Minnesota says that it should be the mindset of a broadcaster to serve the community and to be involved.¹³ Particularly in smaller markets local television stations serve as indispensable organs of communication and organization. Without exception, their managers are keenly aware of the unique power of their medium and the special responsibility it carries.¹⁴ Public service announcements are the fuel for these stations to be active in the community.

If PSAs cannot be guaranteed in the traditional ways of the past, what new practices need to be developed that would keep this wonderful medium on the side of all the public service goals that PSAs have so nobly and successfully served? Federal Communications Commission Chairmen Reed Hundt, when discussing public service announcements, asked this question.¹⁵

Getting your PSA Aired

Getting your TV PSAs cleared by the four major broadcast networks is a critical part of the distribution plan. For most organizations, it is difficult to determine the

¹² PSA Bibliography. “Tough Competition for Free Television, Effect of “Mega-Campaigns.” <http://psaresearch.com/bib4705.html>

¹³ Jerry Watson. National Association of Broadcasters. <http://www.benton.org/policy/tv/piac.html>

¹⁴ National Association of Broadcasters. <http://www.benton.org/policy/tv/piac.html>

estimated value of network exposure because networks send most PSAs to their affiliates in an “uncovered” feed, meaning they can be pre-empted by paid spots.¹⁶

The author uncovered four basic steps to follow to ensure that a PSA is considered for network approval. These steps were concept clearance, organizational clearance, dub formats and technical requirements.

Concept clearance refers to the submitting of draft scripts and visual concepts to the clearance departments of each network. With the creative materials, agencies must remember to submit a copy of a tax-free certificate.

Organizational clearance refers to new organizations or someone who has not produced a public service announcement previously. If you are engaged in fund-raising, make sure you are listed with either the Philanthropic Division of the Better Business Bureau or the National Charities Information Bureau. The networks will require proof of registration.

Dub formats tells that each of the networks has different requirements for preview and airplay dubs, which you must observe to be approved for usage.

Technical requirements say that all public service announcements need to have 60 seconds of audio tone and color bars followed by 15 seconds of slate and 10 seconds of black. Horizontal blanking should be between 10.7 and 11.1 microseconds. Vertical blanking should not exceed 21 lines.

After submission of creative concepts, the networks usually respond in writing to let you know if your campaign has been accepted, and if not, the reason for rejection.

¹⁵ Reed Hundt, FCC. Richard Katz. PSA Bibliography. “Networks Hit on PSA Loads.” <http://www.psaresearch.com/cafl003.html>

¹⁶ Bill Goodwill. PSA Bibliography. “Network Clearance A Producer’s Checklist.” <http://www.psaresearch.com/bib3001.html>

Often they need substantiation for claims or statistics used in the PSAs, which is easily accomplished and then the PSAs can be resubmitted.¹⁷

The networks may also ask for more background information on your organization or cause. These pieces of information may include: an audited annual report of your organization, background information on your organization's history, purpose and objectives, the percentage of your budget used for fundraising, and samples of materials you plan to distribute to the public, particularly if mentioned in the PSA.¹⁸

When creating a public service announcement, there are definite facts your creative staff or agency should consider for network clearance. The sponsoring organization must be national in scope and dedicated to public service or charitable activities. Public service announcements cannot directly or indirectly promote the sale of commercial products or services. The campaign cannot deal with sectarian, be of political partisan or controversial subject or issues, nor can it be designed to influence legislation or government actions.

Once your campaign is approved, each network requires different videotape formats and quantities. Examples are as follows:

Network	Quantity	Preview	Airplay	Comments
ABC	1	¾"	2 – D	None
CBS	2	¾" tied	2 – 1"	Each spot on separate reels and 2 sets
NBC	1	¾"	None	Notifies org. if airplay dubs approved
FOX	1	¾"	1 – 1"	None

¹⁷ Bill Goodwill. PSA Bibliography." Network Clearance, A Producer's Checklist." <http://www.psaresearch.com/bib3001.html>

¹⁸ Bill Goodwill. PSA Bibliography." Network Clearance, A Producer's Checklist." <http://www.psaresearch.com/bib3001.html>

Getting appointments with network clearance directors should be considered. They are busy people and receive hundreds of public service announcement submissions for consideration, so agencies should respect their time demands. As an alternative, agencies should send a letter with the public service announcement to the contacts.¹⁹

In the past, to fulfill FCC requirements that a broadcaster operate in the public interest, stations had to file a multitude of forms. Today, in the spirit of deregulation and to cut out a mountain of paperwork, many of the forms are being discarded as the FCC modifies, deletes, or rewrites the rules.²⁰ This situation now virtually allows stations to set their own standards on what constitutes proper fulfillment of their public service programming responsibilities. This has not reduced the amount of public service time available, but it has caused the stations to take a closer look at the whole subject of public service announcements.

A former code of the National Association of Broadcasters gives a clue to how stations determine who gets on the air. The code stated: "Requests for time and placement of the public service announcements or programs should be carefully reviewed with respect to the character and reputation of the group, the campaign or organization involved, the public interest content of the message and the manner of presentation."²¹

Creating a Professional Product

The most attention from a station will be paid to the organization that best prepared its public service announcement. "Be totally professional – first in the product

¹⁹Bill Goodwill. PSA Bibliography. "Network Clearance, A Producer's Checklist."
<http://psaresearch.com/bib3001.html>

²⁰Jack McGuire. PSA Bibliography. "Let's Clear the Air About Public Service Announcements."
<http://www.psaresearch.com/cafl020.html>

²¹Jack McGuire. PSA Bibliography. "Let's Clear the Air About Public Service Announcements."
<http://www.psaresearch.com/cafl020.html>

you create, and then in how you offer it,” advised Charlotte O’Brien, manager of community affairs for WGN-TV, Chicago. “Watch and listen, not only to learn what the radio and TV stations’ current public service programming reflects, but to gauge the type of material other organizations are getting on the air.”²²

It is important to take the time to make a personal contact with the public service directors of the network outlets and the major independent stations you are targeting to learn exactly what they are looking for.²³ Survey the stations you are interested in through a combination of personal visits, phone calls and letters.

What your feedback will show is that very little uniformity exists in the broadcast industry. Each station or network has its own individual preferences in the matter of public service announcements.

Technical Requirements

“To get maximum placement, it is necessary to know something about the technical as well as the production side [of public service announcements].”²⁴

Organizations should be aware of technical aspects of the public service announcement before producing and presenting their public service announcement to a broadcast station.

Mr. Vance suggested these general guidelines to help organizations produce the most acceptable public service announcements:

- Even though you handle the creative aspects of production in-house, seek technical assistance from an expert outside source unless someone on your staff has an electronics background.

²²Jack McGuire. PSA Bibliography. “Let’s Clear The Air About Public Service Announcements. Create a Professional Product <http://www.psaresearch.com/cafl020.html>

²³ Jack McGuire. PSA Bibliography. “Let’s Clear The Air About Public Service Announcements.” Create a Professional Product. <http://www.psaresearch.com/cafl020.html>

²⁴ Jack McGuire. Charles Vance, director of PR for the National Safety Council, Chicago. PSA Bibliography. “Let’s Clear The Air About Public Service Announcements.” Understand Technical Requirements. <http://www.psaresearch.com/cafl020.html>

- Although videotape is less expensive to produce than film, it's more expensive to edit, duplicate and ship. Because most stations have 16mm equipment, that's the route to go.
- The common length of a public service announcement is 60, 30, 20, 10, and even five seconds for both radio and TV. The most acceptable is 30 seconds.
- TV networks will request materials for previewing in one particular format, probably 16mm.
- Most local TV stations will accept 35mm slide/script spots in addition to 16mm films.

If large numbers excite your organization, there are several direct avenues to national network exposure. In dealing with the networks, use the same procedure your organization would use on a local level. Contact the public affairs director at the national level to learn of their exact requirements and how to proceed.

Distribution of Public Service Announcements

When you begin distributing your organization's public service announcements, there are suggested pointers your organization may follow.

Cultivate the Networks – Send your scripts and storyboards at least a month before production begins. This is to be sure that your public service announcement is acceptable to the station standards.

Know What Local Stations Want – There are roughly 1,000 commercial TV stations in America today. Each has its own public service announcement material preferences. If a station wants a 1-inch videotape send them a 1-inch tape, not what you think they want. You'll increase your chances of getting airtime.

Put Pizzazz in Your Package – The CBS network alone received 17,000 public service announcement packages in 1985. The demand for network airtime increased 40

percent in six years. The competition is tough and you've got to beat them to get on the air. Your packaging could be part of the answer, because it's the first thing the public service director sees. Consider:

- Using a well designed four color label on the exterior
- Including a four color storyboard and letter to public service directors telling them what the public service announcement is about and why it's important to their viewers
- Including a postage paid business reply card in the package which tells how often the station used the public service announcement and what video formats they prefer

Alert Stations In Advance – Think about sending a note or promotional piece to local stations on your mailing list in advance of distributing your public service announcement. Tell them why your message is important to their viewers, rather than your organization's interest.

Use Strategic Distribution – Which stations do you target? You should give the same thought to distributing your materials as you did in producing them. You should be able to answer: Who are my primary and secondary target audiences? Where do they live? What stations reach them most efficiently? Answering these questions will help you plan a more strategic distribution procedure.

Consider Contracting Out – Even after the challenging job of getting your campaign in the can, you've still got a lot of work to do. There are mailing lists to compile, labels to produce, video tapes to duplicate in the proper quantities and formats, printed elements to produce, materials to be inserted, labels to affix and postage regulations to follow. You may be able to reduce costs and use your staff more productively by selecting a full-service vendor to handle these important but tedious details.

Build Good Station Relations – If a public service director takes the time to return your campaign business reply card, send the director a thank you note. Have your local representatives take the director to lunch. Send the director premium times or unique certificates of appreciation. Have the director’s photo taken with your local representative awarding the certificate.

Keep Stations Informed – Use briefings, luncheons or whatever works to keep the station informed. Don’t always go to the stations asking for a handout. Make them a part of your campaign in some imaginative way.

Evaluate Your Campaigning – It is extremely important to know where and when your public service announcements are airing. It’s even nice to know what they are worth. Perhaps as important, you should know where they are not playing and why. If you don’t know, your boss will probably want to know:

- What are we getting for our money?
- In which of our primary markets are we getting airtime?
- What kinds of audiences are we reaching with our messages?
- What formats do the media want to receive?

Act Upon Evaluation Results – Once evaluation is complete, use the results as a basis for taking corrective action. Consider using a different mix of video materials; test the effectiveness of local versus national distribution in selected markets; contact stations that have not used your materials and find out why. Evaluation data is worthless unless you use it to improve performance.²⁵

²⁵ PSA Bibliography. “How To Get More Cluck for the Buck when Distributing PSAs – TV.” <http://www.psaresearch.com/bib4105.html>

Several recent articles have noted that intense competition for public service announcement exposure has forced some organizations to buy broadcast airtime that they used to get at no cost. This leads organizations to ponder the questions, Are PSAs still viable communications technique? Is there a downward trend in media donations? Are PSAs being relegated to “junk time”? Does it make more sense to buy time?²⁶

Another important point for organizations regarding their public service announcements is the time of day when the public service announcement will be aired. There is controversy regarding the effectiveness of late placements. However, there is evidence that suggests that public service announcements on television have an enormous impact, regardless of how late at night they appear.²⁷ Many organizations are worried that their public service announcement will not air during the high viewership parts of the day, morning, dinner and prime time.

As a way of increasing frequency and gaining greater control over placement of messages, many non-profit organizations are turning to paid advertising that previously would have run on a public service basis. Experts say that while purchasing time may appear to be the solution in the short term, it could pose significant problems down the road.

The first and most obvious drawback is cost. Most non-profit organizations do not have the funding to pay the networks' high prices to air a spot on their stations. Secondly, there is the possibility of being excluded from future public service announcement

²⁶ PSA Bibliography. “PSAs, What Can They Accomplish?, To Buy or Not To Buy?”
<http://www.psaresearch.com/bib4702.html>

²⁷ PSA Bibliography. “PSAs, What Can They Accomplish?, To Buy or Not To Buy?” article published in TV Guide. <http://www.psaresearch.com/bib4702.html>

consideration due to a precedent of purchasing airtime.²⁸ Many stations do not feel that organizations should be offered free airtime and be allotted paid time as well. Many organizations are turning to corporate sponsorship, that too could be fraught with peril, since alignment with one corporate sponsor might cause a competing corporation to withdraw its support for an organization.²⁹

Tips For High Impact Broadcast PSAs

Build Evaluation into Campaign Strategy

When an agency begins planning its campaign, the agency should think about how you are going to measure the campaign's impact. For example, include an 800 toll-free telephone number in PSAs or include local chapter addresses in television tags, which give public service announcements a better local slant.

Know What Stations Want

To maximize usage and reduce wasted effort, distribute PSAs in the formats stations prefer. The television networks and most large market stations prefer 1-inch and will not use anything else.

Use Strategy in Your Distribution Plan

With nearly 13,000 radio and television stations in the country, which ones should you target and why? You should be able to answer: Who are my target audiences? Where do they live? What stations reach primary audiences most efficiently? What stations regularly use PSAs?

²⁸ PSA Bibliography. "PSAs, What Can They Accomplish?, To Buy or Not To Buy?" <http://www.psaresearch.com/bib4702.html>

²⁹ PSA Bibliography. "PSAs, What Can They Accomplish?, To Buy or Not To Buy?" <http://www.psaresearch.com/bib4702.html>

High Impact on a Low Budget

When faced with limited production budgets, use low cost, imaginative PSAs to get your message across. Use outtakes from a previous film or PSA; update or recycle a previous PSA; obtain rights to use segments from film archives.

Cultivate the Networks; Know Their Requirements

Learn what the networks want and try to get appointments with public service or clearance directors to present your campaign, rather than sending it to them. Send scripts and visual concepts to television networks for clearance before shooting begins.

Remember cable networks in your distribution. There are more than a dozen that accept public service announcements.

Take Corrective Action

Compile data on audience and market penetration levels, performance by media type and advertising equivalence. By comparing usage data to your goal, you can pinpoint what areas are weak in public service announcement attainment and take corrective action.³⁰

Communication literature reveals a dearth of information on the benefits of using donated media strategies (PSAs) compared to paid strategies (advertising). One study has been published with Murry, Stam and Lastovicka's article "Paid – Versus Donated – Media Strategies for Public Service Announcement Campaigns," found in *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1996. Murry et al. note that public service announcements have been debated for over four decades. Some of the problems of public service announcements are that

³⁰ PSA Bibliography. "PSAs, What Can They Accomplish, To Buy or Not To Buy?" <http://www.psaresearch.com/bib4702.html>

they rarely are able to emulate more expensive practices used by consumer-products advertising campaign. One reason is because public service announcements must rely on donated media rather than paid media schedules.³¹

Public service announcements are believed to be problematic for several reasons, according to the authors of the article. First, campaign managers cannot control when, where, how often, or even whether target audiences are exposed to PSA messages. Second, because PSAs are played during times not bought by paid advertisers, much of the media time does not reach intended audiences. Third, many public service announcements have difficult persuasion tasks, which require message repetition to be effective.³²

Murry et al cite another challenge to PSA success: the decreased availability of donated media support. The media uses PSAs in time or space unsold to paid advertisers. Therefore, PSA usage may fluctuate with the health of the economy. A second factor influencing the amount of donated media is the large number of competing “good causes”.

On April 4, 1989 a one-day seminar about public service announcements brought together producers, ad agencies and corporate public relations officials. The program included examples of what constitutes good and bad public service announcements. The program focused on sharing production and marketing tips to improve station play. Bob Druckenmiller, executive vice president of Porter/Novelli, Inc., pointed out that up to 61 percent of all public service announcements distributed to television stations are sent in

³¹ PSA Bibliography. “Paid-Vs Donated Public Service Announcements, Strategies for PSA Campaigns Review.” <http://www.psaresearch.com/bib4703.html>

³² PSA Bibliography. “Paid-Vs Donated Public Service Announcements, Strategies for PSA Campaigns Review.” <http://www.psaresearch.com/bib4703.html>

the wrong tape format. Druckenmiller counseled public service announcement distributors to do a better job of matching spots to a station's technical requirements and saying "thank you to cooperative broadcasters who run public service announcements." All too often, he noted, there is no follow-up after stations are sent public service announcements.³³

Also attending the conference was Rose Mary Romano, chief of the Public Information Branch, Office of Smoking and Health. She shared tips like:

- Invest most of your time and resources in the creative process. Remember that your PSA must often compete for available time with AIDS or drugs "mega-campaigns." A heavy investment up front will produce a more competitive spot in the end.
- Consider doing away with "bounce-back cards" and using a telemarketing source or doing telephone surveys to measure the effectiveness of a PSA distribution. Buy a monitoring service if you can afford it, such as Arbitron's BAR Reports.³⁴

Broadcast Standards

An address on ABC-TV by Chris Hikawa focused on the chances of getting public service announcements aired on network television. Ms. Hikawa is the network's vice president for broadcast standards. She revealed that ABC and the other TV networks receive 1,500 PSAs per year from hundreds of organizations. She advised all PSA producers to clear scripts with the networks prior to production to avoid spending money on a spot that does not meet network standards. According to Hikawa, 30 seconds is the preferred length for a spot on the network, but 15-second spots are also very desirable.

³³ Lew Brodsky. PSA Bibliography. "First Ever" PSA Conference. <http://www.psaresearch.com.bib4704.html>

For network use, the subject matter addressed by a PSA must be national in scope and not be political or controversial. Every PSA used on ABC must include the name of the sponsoring organization. PSAs do not compete for time with commercials on ABC because each is scheduled separately.³⁵

PSA Myths and FAQs

A frequently asked question by producers regarding public service announcements seems to be: What spot lengths are the best to produce? The answer is to produce as many as you can afford. The key to getting good placement of public service announcements is to provide the media as much flexibility as you can, because it increases the chance that your public service announcement will get used. Don't overlook the sixty-second PSA. They are 56-72 percent of all the public service announcements aired. Sixty-second PSAs tend to be well produced in terms of message content and production values, and do a better job of representing both the producer and the station. They are also worth a lot more than other shorter lengths and contribute significantly to higher dollar values, which is an important part of campaign evaluation.³⁶

Another frequently asked question about public service announcements is: What is the shelf life of a PSA...how long can one expect a public service announcement to air? When response cards were the state-of-the-art way to evaluate PSAs, the average shelf life for a campaign was believed to be about 12 weeks. When passive monitoring and electronic tracking became available, the tracking lengthened to 13 weeks, then most

³⁴ Lew Brodsky. PSA Bibliography. "First Ever" PSA Conference.
<http://www.psaresearch.com.bib4704.html>

³⁵ Lew Brodsky. PSA Bibliography. "First Ever" PSA Conference.
<http://www.psaresearch.com.bib4704.html>

campaigns tracked for 26 weeks. It is becoming more commonplace for organizations to track campaigns longer, for at least six months.

What are the best formats to use when distributing PSAs to TV stations? How do you know what to send the stations? Hire a good distributor. The format situation is becoming increasingly complex, particularly among television stations. Today, stations want a combination of ¾-inch, 1-inch, and BETA. Knowing required formats for each station on your distribution list is a critical part of getting your PSAs aired. Your distributor should have this information.

Are most PSAs broadcast in “junk time” from midnight to 6 AM when no one is watching TV? To quote from a major market TV public service director: “Honey, when you ain’t paying for the time, any time is good.” The majority of all PSAs air in the more desirable dayparts. Late night is not necessarily bad time.

To whom should I send my PSAs? The key contact is different depending on the medium. For television, there may be several people who typically make the PSA decision, depending upon the size of the station and their community affairs policy. It is usually the Public Service Director, the Director of Community Affairs, or the Program Director. At smaller stations, the General Manager may be the contact person. The GM usually has a heavy influence on program policies, regardless of station size. You should send PSAs to a specific person rather than to a generic title. Being aware of all the little details can help you get your message on the air. The personal touch can make the difference in getting your materials used or sent to the garbage. Don’t forget to say thank

³⁶ PSA Research. “MYTHS and FAQ’s, Myths and Frequently Asked Questions About PSAs.” <http://www.psaresearch.com/faq.html>

you to those media outlets that use your PSAs. These dedicated professionals provide non-profits with hundreds of millions of dollars worth of free time and space each year.

What topics do most media gatekeepers find most helpful? Local issues. All public service announcements should have a local angle. Television stations interests lie in increasing the station's ratings. They will do whatever they can to reach local viewers.

Do PSAs really work? Scholarly literature on the subject is limited; there is tremendous empirical evidence that public service announcements are a cost-effective way to reach the public about important issues and causes.³⁷

STUDY 1

TV Access prepared and conducted an extensive survey to understand public service announcements in the cable television market. Two hundred twenty-two respondents completed the survey in its entirety. The percentage of response was 17 percent. The results were concluded as follows:

Stations are interested in receiving PSAs (93 percent). Stations offer a high number of open slots for PSAs each week.

High production quality is the most important criterion to most cable stations. It is also clear that a clear message is important to the vast majority of cable stations. Safety information messages are least important messages for PSAs.

Cable stations prefer original sound tracks on PSAs. Feature artists were in second place. Stock music was third.³⁸

³⁷ PSA Research. "MYTHS and FAQs, Myths and Frequently Asked Questions About PSAs." <http://www.psaresearch.com/faq.html>

STUDY 2

TV Access conducted a second survey regarding public service announcements in broadcast television. The survey was sent to 700 television stations nationwide. One hundred fifty-eight respondents completed the survey. The percentage of response was 23 percent.

The first question asked was: Is it important that PSAs be localized for your area? Of the stations responding, 33 percent said it was very important; 38 percent said it was somewhat important; 20 percent prefer it; and nine percent felt it was not important.

What qualifies as localization at your station? The answers supplied by the responding stations were: local organization named; county or other area named; state named; phone number to local facility indicated; station call letters; and station call letters plus local facility.

The question was asked: If spots were localized with your station call letters, would these PSAs on average receive more usage? Thirty-nine percent responded that it would be used more than other local PSAs and 61 percent say it would not. Sixty-three percent say it would be used more than a national PSA and 37 percent say it would not.

Another question was; Do you ever localize a :25/:05 or :53/:07? Of the 148 respondents the results were: 59 percent said yes and 41 percent said no.

What collateral paper do you prefer to receive with PSAs? Some stations made more than one selection. The results were as follows:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| ▪ 501C3 Documentation | 57 respondents |
| ▪ Form to Order Free Materials | 36 respondents |
| ▪ Comment Mechanism | 19 respondents |

³⁸Keith Hempel, president TV Access. "Survey, Methodology."
<http://www.tvaccess.com/PSAResearch/TVAccess/1001.html>

▪ Photoboard	88 respondents
▪ Organization Fact Sheet	74 respondents
▪ Scripts	80 respondents
▪ Other	6 respondents

Stations desire the three to four pieces of documentation that normally accompany a client release. It may be costly and cumbersome to include this much documentation with 10 to 20 releases in a compilation reel.³⁹

Books

In a book called *Writing for the Broadcast Media* by Peter E. Mayeux, PSAs are briefly discussed. Public service announcements need solid, effective, persuasive writing and production techniques.⁴⁰

Public service announcements should follow a statement of objectives before production begins. The statement of objectives must be:

- Expressed as a clear, positive statement of the communications job to be accomplished aimed at a specific target audience or group, with a specific result over a specific period of time
- Realistic and capable of being measured
- Capable of being translated into a specific plan of action and effective broadcast message
- Based upon a thorough analysis of the marketplace, the client, the product or service and the consumer
- Agreed upon by the client before any broadcast message is written or produced⁴¹

³⁹ Television PSA Trends Survey. TV Access.
<http://www.tvaccess.com/PSAResearch/tvdec98/TVSurv1298pg4.html>

⁴⁰ Peter E. Mayeux. "Writing for the Broadcast Media." The University of Nebraska – Lincoln, © 1985. page 79. Chapter 4 Commercials and Announcements.

⁴¹ Peter E. Mayeux. "Writing for the Broadcast Media." The University of Nebraska – Lincoln, © 1985. page 84. Chapter 4 Commercials and Announcements.

The following are suggestions to assist writers with producing public service announcements:

- Keep the announcement in good taste. Display your standards of creative professionalism and respect your audience. Avoid obvious exaggerations and phony testimonials
- Know the facts. Know your client. Get the necessary background information to write in an accurate manner.
- Be as specific as possible when relaying information on prices, products and services. Be clear but interesting, effective and persuasive.
- If known in advance, adjust the style and content of the copy to the time of day and to the circumstances under which the announcement will be broadcast.
- Stress benefits. Tell the viewer what is in it for him or her. Indicate why it is important to respond quickly to the announcement.
- Get and hold attention. Build curiosity and suspense.
- Prepare the battle plan. Know your objectives. Select the route carefully.
- Use catchwords effectively.
- Use the right appeal. Understand the emotions and lifestyle of the target group.
- Use humor cautiously. Make it work for the client, product or service.
- Know the rules. Know what the client, the audience, and the law expect of you. Be aware of the parameters. Know the limits.
- Work toward realistic creativity.
- Make each message distinguishable. Establish identity with each announcement.
- Polish until it shines. Check everything. Make each announcement reflect your best personal professional effort.⁴²

Copy design suggestions were also provided. They are as follows:

- Use only one principal selling idea in each announcement.
- Sell early and often.
- Emphasize the client, product or service. Make it the star of the message.
Repeat the product, service or client name often.
- Create an affordable, attractive need in the audience's mind.
- Put the audience in the picture.
- Use production elements creatively and effectively.
- Keep in touch with the copy rationale.
- End the message with energy. Make the message end with strength.⁴³

Language use suggestions were also provided as follows:

- Talk the audience's language. Choose words that express ideas in a clear, simple direct manner.
- Use positive action words. Stress urgency and immediacy. Select words with care.
- Do not overuse such verbal devices as alliteration, sibilants, fricatives and plosives.
- Make certain your grammar and spelling are correct.
- Simplify your copy. Make every idea as clear as you can.
- Remember the consumer's perspective.
- Avoid cliches, indefinite pronouns, and unnecessary numbers unless these help the audience remember the central sales message.
- Construct sentences carefully and with purpose.⁴⁴

⁴² Peter E. Mayeux. "Writing for the Broadcast Media." The University of Nebraska – Lincoln, © 1985. page 115. Chapter 4 Commercials and Announcements.

⁴³ Peter E. Mayeux. "Writing for the Broadcast Media." The University of Nebraska – Lincoln, © 1985. page 117. Chapter 4 Commercials and Announcements.

⁴⁴ Peter E. Mayeux. "Writing for the Broadcast Media." The University of Nebraska – Lincoln, © 1985. page 117. Chapter 4 Commercials and Announcements.

Visualization suggestions were offered as well. The are as follows:

- Storyboard your message.
- Scrutinize visual sequencing. Make sure each shot and each scene builds logically.
- Eliminate shots and scenes that do not relate to the central message of the announcement.
- Know the creative potential. Be conscious of why each kind of shot is selected, how it is used, and what the effect of each will be.
 - Remember the audio. Make the sound portion of the message complement, reinforce or counterpoint the video.⁴⁵

Broadcast Copywriting by Peter B. Orlik also gave tips regarding public service announcements. Research indicates that less than one percent of total television time is devoted to public service announcements. It is further estimated that a given public service announcement campaign must compete for airtime with at least 100 other PSA campaigns at any given moment.

The personnel and equipment at any given television station can seldom accommodate material that does not come ready for airing. This means that PSAs should arrive at the station finished and formatted to that particular station.⁴⁶

In television, some writers feel that the availability of a visual makes possible the inclusion of two, three or even more copy points. Television does have both audio and visual vehicles for the conveyance of data, but this also more than doubles the stimuli load audience members are asked to ingest. Adding multiple copy points to the mixture

⁴⁵ Peter E. Mayeux. "Writing for the Broadcast Media." The University of Nebraska – Lincoln, © 1985. page 118. Chapter 4 Commercials and Announcements.

⁴⁶ Peter B. Orlik. "Broadcast Copywriting." Third Edition, Central Michigan University, © 1986, 1982, 1978. page 315. Chapter 10 Television Housekeeping Copy, March to the Beat of the Station's Drummer.

only guarantees that, no matter how much information is originally taken in, little if any will possess the needed salience for viewer retention and later recall.⁴⁷

This principle is especially important to the television public service announcement in which a usually intangible “product” requires disciplined and definitive explication. For the video PSA to succeed, every picture and supporting sound must contribute to the reaching of the one, key conclusion for which the message was written in the first place. The initial vagueness of most public service subjects makes it especially important that the sequence of selected pictures leads inevitably to viewer comprehension, if not actual acceptance, of the announcement’s central tenet.⁴⁸

Another way of analyzing the appropriateness of PSA visuals is to try to ascertain their believability within the confines of the single statement their message is striving to register. The believable PSA entices viewers to put themselves “in the picture” – to participate mentally and emotionally in the little vignette being spun out before their eyes. The credibility of the communication may itself constitute the element you are trying to sell. The message has to appeal to what persuasion theory calls enlightened self-interest: we are willing to believe in and subscribe to bannered principles and advocated practices because of “what’s in it for us.”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Peter B. Orlik. “Broadcast Copywriting.” Third Edition, Central Michigan University, © 1986, 1982, 1978. page 316. Chapter 10 Television Housekeeping Copy, One Concept to a Customer, Please.

⁴⁸ Peter B. Orlik. “Broadcast Copywriting.” Third Edition, Central Michigan University, © 1986, 1982, 1978. page 316. Chapter 10 Television Housekeeping Copy, One Concept to a Customer, Please.

⁴⁹ Peter B. Orlik. “Broadcast Copywriting.” Third Edition, Central Michigan University, © 1986, 1982, 1978. page 318. Chapter 10 Television Housekeeping Copy, Believability Is Not an Option.

Believability in the PSA is thus anything but an option. It is an indispensable quality that comes from sincere-sounding copy, natural casting, and comfortable but not dull photographic values.⁵⁰

- Sincere-Sounding Copy - Copy that makes sense and makes it in a way that strikes the audience as neither pompous nor patronizing. Both lyric and straight material can possess sincerity.
- Natural Casting – Because television announcements that show people tend to be more interesting to people, casting is an important consideration.
- Comfortable (but not dull) Photographic Values – A believable PSA does not exude an institutional formality in the direction and placing of its shots. Nor, on the other hand, are its production techniques so avant- that only spaced-out video freaks understand them. The tendency of some PSA writers is to swing from one extreme to the other, although this is not recommended.⁵¹

Organizations should also beware of the CEBUS factor. Standing for Confirmed Exposure But Unconscious, CEBUS is a motivational research term that describes the phenomenon whereby a person's sensory system was exposed to a stimulus but without any conscious registering. If CEBUS is a problem of such magnitude as regards tangible products, it is easy to see its import for the initially intangible subjects pitched in public service announcements.⁵²

Perhaps the most important question at all is whether PSAs really work. "It is nearly impossible to determine the impact of PSAs upon changing public behavior and

⁵⁰ Peter B. Orlik. "Broadcast Copywriting." Third Edition, Central Michigan University, © 1986, 1982, 1978. page 318. Chapter 10 Television Housekeeping Copy, Believability Is Not an Option.

⁵¹ Peter B. Orlik. "Broadcast Copywriting." Third Edition, Central Michigan University, © 1986, 1982, 1978. page 319. Chapter 10 Television Housekeeping Copy, Believability Is Not an Option.

⁵² Peter B. Orlik. "Broadcast Copywriting." Third Edition, Central Michigan University, © 1986, 1982, 1978. page 324. Chapter 10 Television Housekeeping Copy, Beware of the CEBUS Factor.

attitudes, because there are so many different factors that can influence the ultimate success of a campaign.”⁵³

Vilsack is an independent broadcast producer with extensive public service announcement experience. The time of year when the campaign is distributed, the creative quality of materials, how the issue is perceived locally, and many other factors can determine outcome.

Current data suggests that well conceived and soundly executed public service announcement campaigns are an effective communications technique for non-profits – something that is not likely to change in the near future, despite the increased competition.

⁵³ Roger Vilsack. PSA Bibliography. “PSAs, What Can They Accomplish, To Buy or not To Buy?” <http://www.psaresearch.com/bib4702.html>

CHAPTER III: PROCEDURES

Research for this thesis was gathered through several sources. These sources include (1) library database research; (2) Internet; (3) books obtained personally and (4) interviews with professionals.

Library Research

The Rowan University Library was used to search for pertinent information regarding public service announcements for broadcast television. Keyword searches were conducted in the library's database. Various keywords used were: *public service announcements, PSA, broadcast television, public relations, non-profit agencies*. Many articles were obtained; however, not all were applicable to the study.

Also at the Rowan University Library the author conducted an Internet search. Search engines used were *Lexus-Nexus, Yahoo, Excite, Infoseek, Northernlights, Lycos, Dogpile and Ask Jeeves*. Searches were conducted using keywords similar or the same to those listed above. Many articles were found and many were extremely informational pertaining to the study at hand.

Literature

The author obtained print sources from Rowan University Professor and Advisor Ned Eckhardt of the Television Department. Included sources were: *Writing for*

Broadcast Media, MediaWriting, Broadcast/Cable Copywriting and Television Station Operations and Management.

The provided books contained facts and information regarding the writing and producing of public service announcements for broadcast television. These sources were used to provide the author with background information regarding public service announcements for broadcast television.

Interviews

Fifty professionals from the broadcast television industry were interviewed via telephone. These professionals work in the top 35 markets in the United States. Those interviewed were generally community affairs directors, public affairs directors or general managers of their station. These individuals preview incoming public service announcements, select those which will air and decide when to air the spots.

Application

Following completion of the research, all material related to the subject was read, highlighted, separated and filed according to subject.

Once all notes were compiled and organized, they were broken down further into sections and subheadings for incorporation into the applicable section of this thesis.

Conclusions were drawn based on the information from the sources and written into a guide that could be used by public relations professionals and other non-profit organizations to assist in the creation of public service announcements.

CHAPTER IV: INTERVIEW RESULTS

The following results are those tabulated from the author's conducted interviews. The author interviewed public affairs directors, community affairs directors and general managers from 50 television stations from the top 35 markets in the United States. A list of approximately 200 television stations from these markets was compiled. Fifty of those 200 stations agreed to participate in the study. The interview lengths ranged from eight to 120 minutes each. The following are the author's findings coordinated with each interview question.

1. Does your station air public service announcements?

99 percent do air PSAs

1 percent do not air PSAs

2. How many PSAs do you receive weekly?

72 percent receive five-15 PSAs weekly

15 percent receive 16-20 PSAs weekly

6 percent receive 20-25 PSAs weekly

7 percent receive 2-5 PSAs weekly

3. How many PSAs actually air weekly?

84 percent air 75-250 PSAs weekly

16 percent air 25-75 PSAs weekly

4. What format do you prefer to receive PSAs in?

74 percent prefer BETA SP

26 percent prefer a mixture of 1-inch, BETA or 1-inch, BETA or $\frac{3}{4}$ inch or simply $\frac{3}{4}$ inch tape

5. What PSA length does your station prefer?

34 percent prefer 30-second spots

20 percent prefer either 15 or 30-second spots

12 percent will accommodate 10, 15, 20, or 30-second spots

34 percent accept PSAs ranging from 10 to 60 seconds

6. How do you choose which PSAs will receive airtime? Are local spots best? Do you choose issues pertaining to your demographic audience?

Approximately 99 percent of the stations interviewed answered this question the same way. Stations preferred to receive local spots that pertain to the particular station's demographic audience. National spots are also chosen frequently because of their good production quality. The remaining one- percent were Christian stations who chose only religious public service announcements to air.

7. Do you have a specific set of rules or guidelines you follow to help you decide which PSAs get airtime and which do not? If yes, what are the rules and guidelines? Do you follow an in-house stylebook?

100 percent answered “No”

The discretion lies with the community affairs, public service or public affairs person to determine personal station rules regarding public service announcements.

8. What are three positive aspects of a ‘good’ PSA in your opinion?

94 percent want good production quality

6 percent gave mixed answers including:

PSAs w/ a local spin

PSAs that fit the station’s target audience

PSAs that have a clear clean message

PSAs that use celebrities

PSAs that use kids

9. What are three negative aspects of a ‘bad’ PSA in your opinion?

97 percent poor production quality

3 percent gave mixed answers including:

message not targeted to the station’s audience

“talking head”

solicitation of money

no contact information

material that is too graphic

celebrities

10. Do you view each PSA that comes into your station? If not, why?

96 percent answered “Yes”

4 percent answered “No”

Stations will look at storyboards or the summary letter to see if the public service announcement pertains to the particular station’s audience.

11. How do you decide placement of PSAs?

Ninety-seven percent of stations use whatever open slots are leftover after the commercial spots are sold and the stations use their share of in-house promotional time.

Three percent of stations set aside some time for public service announcements.

12. Does management ever come to you with a particular PSA and insist you give it airtime?

99 percent answered “No”

1 percent answered “Yes”

13. Do you accept PSAs that mention that they are corporately funded?

Ninety-eight percent will not accept corporately funded spots.

Two percent said it depends on how obvious the corporate sponsor is tagged. If the PSA is obviously selling the corporation then the station will not air the spot. If the corporate tag is miniscule, then the station will air the spot.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Public service announcements remain a useful tool for non-profit agencies to get a message out to a large audience for little to no money. After interviewing the 50 television stations, it is clear that public service announcements must be created in a particular, methodical manner.

Public service announcements must contain information that is relevant to the audience of the particular television station where it will air. Remember that a PSA about snow emergencies will not be relevant to a South Florida television audience.

Public service announcements must be produced well. The picture should be a clear and sharp image. The audio must also be clear. Many television stations will offer their services to non-profit agencies to assist in the production of public service announcements. Non-profit agencies must remember to contact local stations and ask about these free or low-cost services.

Public service announcements must contain a message that is easily identified by the viewer. Non-profit agencies must have a writer who can convey a particular message in about 30 seconds or less.

Non-profit agencies will benefit if their PSAs include a call to action in the script. Including a call to action will also give the PSA a better chance of being selected to receive airtime. They should offer a phone number, address or website so that audiences have somewhere to turn for more information. PSAs should not contain a solicitation for money. That aspect of fund-raising should be done at a later, more personal, encounter.

Non-profit agencies must remember to get to know the television stations where they will be sending their spot. Non-profits must not blindly send out 100 PSAs to random television stations around the country. Each television station has its own set of public service announcement rules and guidelines. If non-profits take care to follow these particular guidelines, then the chance that their PSA will be aired is greater. When non-profits simply send out PSAs with an incorrect format to a particular station, that PSA usually ends up in the trash. Television stations will not call the non-profit with an explanation. Also, non-profit agencies should not call the television station too often to check the status of a particular PSA. Non-profit agencies should send a reply card when they send a PSA to a television station. This card, when filled out by someone at the station, will supply all airing information for the non-profit agency.

Non-profit agencies must remember that while using celebrities in their public service announcements can help to give credibility to the service, many celebrities are contracted to a particular network. Celebrities are contracted to a particular network and are prohibited from appearing on another competing network.

Corporately funded public service announcements must be discussed in detail by the non-profit agency and the corporate sponsor. An agreement must be made that even though the sponsor is handling all financial aspect of the PSA, a corporate logo cannot be

included in the announcement. Also, any mention that the spot was corporately sponsored must be minor and generally unnoticed by the viewer. Many television stations will not air PSAs that are corporately sponsored because they feel the announcement takes on commercial status. Even though there are a few television stations that have no problem airing corporately funded public service announcements that contain a corporate tag, the majority of stations choose not to air these announcements.

Recommendations

The author wishes readers to remember that the requirements for public service announcements for broadcast television will change yearly. As television stations receive the newest technology, the format in which non-profits must send PSAs will change.

Readers should also remember the recommendations made by the author in Chapter VI. Non-profit agencies should research the stations where they would like to air a public service announcement. Find available resources to assist in the production of the announcements. Be sure the PSA incorporates a clear targeted message that will benefit the target audience of the station where it will air. Include a call-to-action. Follow-up and use evaluation tips to improve future PSAs.

The author does recommend that further study be conducted to see which public service announcements are truly successful and which are not. The results of that study should be compared to the findings of this study. Do the successful public service announcements follow the findings of this author's study? Do they contain the components of a 'good' or 'bad' public service announcement? What made the PSA successful? The same should be evaluated for unsuccessful public service announcements.

CHAPTER VI: CREATE AN EXCEPTIONAL PSA

Introduction

The creation of public service announcements has changed dramatically over the years. Public service announcements portraying poor quality now have become unacceptable. The technology and assistance exist for non-profit agencies to produce a quality public service announcement.

The information is available so that virtually every non-profit agency can produce a public service announcement that is of good quality and for a worthy cause. The only reason non-profit agencies now have to produce a poor PSA is a lack of knowledge. This guidebook describes the information that non-profit agencies need to know or find out to produce an acceptable and quality public service announcement. It should gain non-profit agencies more for their money when developing public service announcements.

Section 1: PSAs for Broadcast Television

Broadcast television stations will receive anywhere from two to 25 public service announcements per week. That could mean that some stations receive 1300 public service announcements per year. Non-profit agencies may only have funding for one or two public service announcements per year. It is imperative then that these agencies produce exceptional PSAs to ensure that they will receive airtime.

Generally, broadcast television stations will be airing from 25 to 250 public service announcements per week. These spots differ in length and many are only 10 seconds long. Although non-profits may think this gives them a better chance of being aired, they should not be fooled. Many of those 250 spots per week are short spots created by the station's promotions department. These spots are solely to promote upcoming programming on the station. Other pieces that make up that 250 are public service announcements created by the Ad Council. These are governmentally funded public service announcements and usually hold the highest quality of any produced public service announcement. This means that local non-profit agencies creating public service announcements are under extreme pressure to compete with these professionally produced spots.

Do agencies get a fair chance?

Generally every public service announcement that a television station receives will get a fair viewing to decide if it will receive airtime or not. Most television stations feel that it is only fair to view each spot. However, if a PSA is in a fancy package it may win priority at a television station.

Also, the subject matter of the spot could determine whether it is viewed or thrown in the trash. If the station sees that the subject matter is not fitting to the station demographics, then it will not be aired.

When will my PSA be aired?

PSAs are placed generally when no other advertising time could be sold. A television station's main goal is to make money from its advertising. Commercial buyers will pay a lot of money for prime time on any given television station. The overnight time is often unwanted and hence not sold. This is generally where public service announcements will be placed. Television stations cannot let time simply go unused. Since non-profit agencies are not paying for commercial time, they simply must settle for whatever time is available, usually the late or overnight time slots. However, any time is better than no time. Non-profit agencies need to realize that even though their spots are not usually being aired during prime time hours, they are still receiving free broadcast airtime. And yes, there are plenty of television viewers in the middle of the night.

With a little money, non-profit agencies could use roadblocks to ensure that they are reaching the largest number of people possible. Using a roadblock would allow a public service announcement to be aired on several different stations at the exact same time. So, no matter which channel viewers turn to, they will see the same spot. If the public service announcement is of good quality and a very worthy cause, then stations will often agree to use a roadblock as long as the requested time slot is still available. Agencies should not overuse the roadblock, but once or twice per campaign could prove fruitful.

Non-profit agencies should remember that television stations cater first to commercials, then to station promotional spots and lastly to public service announcements.

Build Evaluation into Campaign Strategy

When an agency begins planning its campaign, the agency should think about how it will measure its campaign's impact. For example, agencies need to include an 800 toll-free telephone number in PSAs or include local chapter addresses in television tags, which give public service announcements a better local slant.

Use Strategy in Your Distribution Plan

With nearly 13,000 radio and television stations in the country, which ones should you target and why? You should be able to answer: Who are my target audiences? Where do they live? What stations reach primary audiences most efficiently? What stations regularly use PSAs?

High Impact on a Low Budget

When faced with limited production budgets, use low cost, imaginative PSAs to get your message across. Use outtakes from a previous film or PSA; update or recycle a previous PSA; obtain rights to use segments from film archives.

Take Corrective Action

Compile data on audience and market penetration levels, performance by media type and advertising equivalence. By comparing usage data to your goal, you can pinpoint what areas are weak in public service announcement attainment and take corrective action.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Roger Vilsack. PSA Bibliography. "PSAs, What Can They Accomplish, To Buy or Not To Buy?" <http://www.psaresearch.com/bib4702.html>

Act Upon Evaluation Results

Once evaluation is complete, use the results as a basis for taking corrective action. Consider using a different mix of video materials; test the effectiveness of local versus national distribution in selected markets; contact stations that have not used your materials and find out why. Evaluation data is worthless unless you use it to improve performance.⁵⁵

Several recent articles have noted that intense competition for public service announcement exposure has forced some organizations to buy broadcast airtime that they used to get at no cost. This leads organizations to ponder the questions: Are PSAs still viable communications technique? Is there a downward trend in media donations? Are PSAs being relegated to “junk time”? Does it make more sense to buy time?⁵⁶

Another important point for organizations regarding their public service announcements is the time of day when the public service announcement will be aired. There is controversy regarding the effectiveness of late placements. However, there is evidence that suggests that public service announcements on television have an enormous impact, regardless of how late at night they appear.⁵⁷ Many organizations are worried that their public service announcement will not air during the high viewership parts of the day, morning, dinner and prime time.

As a way of increasing frequency and gaining greater control over placement of messages, many non-profit organizations are turning to paid advertising that previously

⁵⁵ PSA Bibliography. “How To Get More Cluck for the Buck when Distributing PSAs – TV.” <http://www.psaresearch.com/bib4105.html>

⁵⁶ PSA Bibliography. “PSAs, What Can They Accomplish?, To Buy or Not To Buy?” <http://www.psaresearch.com/bib4702.html>

⁵⁷ PSA Bibliography. “PSAs, What Can They Accomplish?, To Buy or Not To Buy?” article published in TV Guide. <http://www.psaresearch.com/bib4702.html>

would have run on a public service basis. Experts say that while purchasing time may appear to be the solution in the short term, it could pose significant problems down the road.

The first and most obvious drawback is cost. Most non-profit organizations do not have the funding to pay the networks' high prices to air a spot on their stations. Secondly, there is the possibility of being excluded from future public service announcement consideration due to a precedent of purchasing airtime.⁵⁸ Many stations do not feel that organizations should be offered free airtime and be allotted paid time as well. Many organizations are turning to corporate sponsorship: that too could be fraught with peril, since alignment with one corporate sponsor might cause a competing corporation to withdraw its support for an organization.⁵⁹ Stations will generally not accept public service announcements that are obviously supported and funded by a corporation. These announcements are often mistaken for commercials and not public service announcements.

⁵⁸ PSA Bibliography. "PSAs, What Can They Accomplish?, To Buy or Not To Buy?"
<http://www.psaresearch.com/bib4702.html>

⁵⁹ PSA Bibliography. "PSAs, What Can They Accomplish?, To Buy or Not To Buy?"
<http://www.psaresearch.com/bib4702.html>

Section 2: Know Your TV Station

Public service announcements for broadcast television are invaluable tools when it comes to sending a message out to a mass audience for little or no money. Any non-profit agency can produce a public service announcement and send it out to all the local television stations in the area. However, sending public service announcements out blindly to any and all local television stations is the first mistake agencies can make. Agencies must first get to know the television stations that will receive the public service announcement. By knowing about where the public service announcement will air, agencies can now bypass sending out public service announcements blindly and unnecessarily.

How to Get to Know Television Stations.

According to Penny Pinsker of WWOR, "It only takes a minute to call the prospective television station and get the PSA requirements for that particular station. There is no excuse for sending PSAs to stations where they can't be used." Television stations are generally willing to share their specific station requirements regarding public service announcements.

Simply obtain the telephone number for the television stations you wish to air your public service announcements. When calling the station, the person to ask for is the 'public affairs director', 'community affairs director' or simply the 'person in charge of public service announcements.' Non-profit agencies will often be connected to an automated service that provides all legal and preferred requirements for public service announcements to air on that particular station. Sometimes, individual stations send a prepared booklet regarding public service announcement requirements. Sometimes a website address is provided to find specific requirements.

Television station phone numbers can be found on the Internet by conducting a station index search on any popular Internet browser.

Cultivate the Networks; Know Their Requirements

Learn what the networks want and try to get appointments with public service or clearance directors to present your campaign, rather than sending it to them. Send scripts and visual concepts to television networks for clearance before shooting begins.

Remember cable networks in your distribution. More than a dozen cable networks that accept public service announcements.

Section 3: Specific Station Requirements

Public service announcements not only address different social and emotional issues but are also able to be presented to a particular television station in a variety of ways. From a slide show to a VHS presentation, public service announcements must be presented to a station in the correct format. Presenting a station with a public service announcement that is in the wrong format may be the deciding factor that places an agency's public service announcement in the 'do not use' bin, a bin that non-profit agencies strive to avoid.

Format

Formatting refers to the way in which a public service announcement is presented. Present-day formats include VHS tapes, slides, 1-inch tapes, ¾ inch tapes, BETA SP, (the newest format) or film. Stations prefer non-profit agencies to use that particular station's preferred format. Most stations cannot accommodate all formats. Their equipment may not be that versatile. If agencies send a public service announcement in the incorrect format, regardless of how fabulous the quality, the station will be unable to use that PSA.

From the 50 television stations polled from the top 35 markets in the USA, 74 percent preferred BETA SP as the format they will accept for a public service announcement. Any other format will be discarded because of lack of versatile equipment. The remaining 26 percent included 1-inch, BETA or 1-inch, BETA or ¾-inch or simply ¾-inch tape.

However, the overwhelming preference for BETA will not be the case forever. Public affairs directors told how BETA is popular because it is the latest piece of television equipment. It shows the best quality for television. But, in five years there is

likely to be an even better piece of technology that will overpower the BETA. It is wise for non-profit agencies to check up on the latest equipment a station is using before sending out PSAs. Remember that not all television stations have the funds to acquire the latest equipment. Just because one of the stations where an agency's PSA will be sent uses BETA, not all of the stations will use it. This is why individual station contacts are so important for non-profit agencies.

PSA Preferred Length

Just as television stations prefer a particular format to receive public service announcements, they also prefer certain PSA lengths to best fit the station programming. Traditionally public service announcements were produced in 30 and 60 second lengths. Sixty-second announcements were ideal for agencies because so much information could be packed in to a full minute spot. Nowadays, stations can use 10, 15 and 20-second spots on air. Sixty-second spots are less popular and generally television stations cannot accommodate a 60-second PSA.

Thirty-four percent of the interviewed television stations preferred 30-second public service announcements for their station. Although they would accept other lengths, they would only air the 30-second spots. The stations accept these other lengths usually only when the PSA is of the best quality and has an excellent message. These spots are kept on file in the case that a corresponding time slot would be available.

Twenty percent of the interviewed stations preferred either 15 or 30-second spots and again would only air these particular lengths. Twelve percent of those interviewed would accommodate 10, 15, 20 or 30 second PSAs and the remaining thirty-four percent accepted PSAs ranging from 10 to 60 seconds.

Stations admitted that in some rare occasions they would air a public service announcement that did not fit their particular time requirement. The public service announcement would need to be extremely well produced and of great social quality to surpass the time restrictions for a particular station.

Section 4: Good vs. Bad PSAs

Public service announcements are a culmination of emotions and technicalities. Some public service announcements are meant to tug at the heartstrings while others unveil brutally startling societal facts. Some public service announcements simply try to introduce a new community club or organization, while others may call for volunteers to assist a worthy cause. Whatever the purpose of the PSA, quality will win over the viewer. No matter how worthy the cause, if the PSA is filled with unappealing or irrelevant information, it will not reach the targeted audience. From the author's interviews, she found the major differences between "good" and "bad" PSAs. These findings are based on the experience and opinion of those station veterans interviewed.

Positive Aspects of a "Good" PSA

Public service announcements for broadcast television must have some professionalism in its production as well as creativity and talent. However, non-profit agencies often overlook these qualities to focus solely on the message at hand, in turn creating a public service announcement that will be rejected from station to station. Here are a few of the qualities that will make a 'good' public service announcement, according to the 50 interviewed stations. Each station was asked to give three positive aspects, in their opinion, of a 'good' public service announcement.

Ninety-four percent of those interviewed stated that good production quality is a must. Good production quality includes a clear picture, clear and crisp audio and a strong clear message. Oftentimes non-profit agencies are working with little funds and the video/audio quality of their public service announcement reflects the lack of money. However, what non-profits often do not know is that some television stations will offer their services to assist in the production of the public service announcement. Also, some

private studios will offer non-profit agencies a very reduced price to produce their piece. Non-profit agencies should remember to inquire about these services. The interviewed television stations stressed that if the quality of the public service announcement is poor, regardless of how important the message or cause, that PSA will probably never receive airtime.

It was also found that television stations favor public service announcements that have a local spin. Television stations despise receiving public service announcements that will not affect the local broadcast audience. Ardis Gonzales from WPLG said, "It would be like sending a PSA about a private non-profit agency in Florida to Washington State to be aired. The people of Washington don't care about that agency in Florida, and the agency just wasted their time and money by sending out the spot."

Closely tied to the local spin came the concern about making sure the PSA will fit a particular station's target audience. If an agency sends a public service announcement about snow emergency safety to a station in south Florida, that agency is wasting time and money. The audience at that station would be better targeted with a public service announcement about hurricane safety. Stations all too often receive numerous public service announcements that are of good quality and portray an educational message but do not fit the target audience for that particular station. Non-profit agencies must remember to research the stations before sending out their public service announcements.

Among the other positive aspects of a "good" public service announcement is making sure the PSA has a clear message. With only 15 or 30 seconds to tell a mini-story, a public service announcement must be right to the point. Agencies should be sure they have a competent writer to compose the script. Read over the PSA with other

members of the agency before production begins to ensure that the message makes sense. Do not add unnecessary ‘fluff’ to the script. Be clear and to the point.

Using celebrities was another aspect that was briefly touched upon. About half of those interviewed suggested using a celebrity in the public service announcement. Celebrities are well known and trusted and having them present an agency’s message will greatly benefit that agency. The other half of those interviewed said that agencies should without a doubt stay away from using celebrities. Celebrities can get into too much trouble and if they are recognized and associated with an agency, it could cloud the reputation of that agency. Also, agencies must be sure to use celebrities that are licensed to the station where the PSA will be sent. If a station uses Rosie O’Donnell for a PSA, then they can only send that PSA to ABC and ABC affiliates; a Fox station will not air that particular PSA.

Also, many of the interviewed stations suggested using children in the PSAs. Karen Ward of WCVB said, “Kids sell. Non-profits should use kids as much as possible to tug at emotions in the viewers. It’s hard to resist a child’s face.”

Negative Aspects of a “Bad” PSA

Because non-profit agencies often work with no budget, the quality of the public service announcements they produce is often less than perfect. Actually, most PSAs produced by non-profit agencies are of unacceptable television quality. Public service announcements of such poor quality never receive the airtime the message might deserve.

From the 50 television stations interviewed the author has compiled a list of negative aspects of a “bad” public service announcement. These should at all cost be avoided by non-profit agencies when creating and producing public service announcements for broadcast television.

Each television station interviewed was asked to offer three negative aspects of a “bad” public service announcement. Ninety-seven percent of those interviewed stated that poor production quality is what will make a ‘bad’ public service announcement. If the lighting is too dark on the video, if the audio is muffled or distorted or if the script is badly written, the public service announcement will not receive airtime on a particular station. Television stations realize that non-profit agencies are working with little to no funding for the production; however, they cannot risk the station’s broadcasting quality simply to air a particular PSA.

Another negative aspect of a “bad” PSA is when the message is not targeted to the audience of the particular station. Non-profit agencies should create public service announcements that are helpful and informative for a variety of audiences, therefore getting the most out of the money spent.

Among the other mentioned negative aspects were the “talking head” and the solicitation of money. A talking head in a public service announcement is an ineffective way to grasp the viewer’s attention. Simply having a body in front of the camera blandly reading a script will not get a non-profit’s cause noticed. It will in fact force viewers to change the channel to find more interesting broadcast television. The same goes for public service announcements that are created solely to solicit funds for that organization. Television stations dislike agencies that create a PSA solely to persuade the viewer to donate funds. Instead, television stations like to see PSAs that contain a “call to action.” Calls to action offer a phone number for interested viewers to obtain more information about the cause, or even a website or address that viewers can utilize to receive more information. Public service announcements that do not contain contact information are

not aired. The reason is simple. If a PSA does not contain some contact information, then interested viewers will call and harass the television station for information about the agency. The individual television stations do not have time to act as liaisons for all of the non-profit agencies whose public service announcements air on their station.

Non-profit agencies should also stay away from material that is too graphic. Public service announcements should be mild enough graphically for any audience. When PSAs address an extremely controversial issue or are simply too graphic, they will often not receive airtime. For example, some stations would not accept a PSA that showed an automobile accident scene with blood and bodies. The target audience of the airing station may not accept the material in the spot.

If an agency chooses to use a celebrity, the agency should be sure that the station receiving the PSA is affiliated with that celebrity; otherwise, the spot will not receive airtime.

Non-profit agencies need to be aware of these problems that can ruin a public service announcement. If agencies stay away from these negative problems, the public service announcements they produce will have a better chance of receiving airtime on any given station.

Section 5: The PSA – Writing

Public service announcements should follow a statement of objectives before production begins. The statement of objectives must be:

- Expressed as a clear, positive statement of the communications job to be accomplished aimed at a specific target audience or group, with a specific result over a specific period of time
- Realistic and capable of being measured
- Capable of being translated into a specific plan of action and effective broadcast message
- Based upon a thorough analysis of the marketplace, the client, the product or service and the consumer
- Agreed upon by the client before any broadcast message is written or produced⁶⁰

The following are suggestions to assist writers with producing public service announcements:

- Keep the announcement in good taste. Display your standards of creative professionalism and respect your audience. Avoid obvious exaggerations and phony testimonials
- Know the facts. Know your client. Get the necessary background information to write in an accurate manner.
- Be as specific as possible when relaying information on prices, products and services. Be clear but interesting, effective and persuasive.
- If known in advance, adjust the style and content of the copy to the time of day and to the circumstances under which the announcement will be broadcast.

⁶⁰ Peter E. Mayeux. "Writing for the Broadcast Media." The University of Nebraska – Lincoln, © 1985. page 84. Chapter 4 Commercials and Announcements.

- Stress benefits. Tell the viewer what is in it for him or her. Indicate why it is important to respond quickly to the announcement.
- Get and hold attention. Build curiosity and suspense.
- Prepare the battle plan. Know your objectives. Select the route carefully.
- Use catchwords effectively.
- Use the right appeal. Understand the emotions and lifestyle of the target group.
- Use humor cautiously. Make it work for the client, product or service.
- Know the rules. Know what the client, the audience, and the law expect of you. Be aware of the parameters. Know the limits.
- Work toward realistic creativity.
- Make each message distinguishable. Establish identity with each announcement.
- Polish until it shines. Check everything. Make each announcement reflect your best personal professional effort.⁶¹

Copy design suggestions were also provided. They are as follows:

- Use only one principal selling idea in each announcement.
- Sell early and often.
- Emphasize the client, product or service. Make it the star of the message. Repeat the product, service or client name often.
- Create an affordable, attractive need in the audience's mind.
- Put the audience in the picture.
- Use production elements creatively and effectively.
- Keep in touch with the copy rationale.
- End the message with energy. Make the message end with strength.⁶²

⁶¹ Peter E. Mayeux. "Writing for the Broadcast Media" The University of Nebraska – Lincoln, © 1985. page 115. Chapter 4 Commercials and Announcements.

⁶² Peter E. Mayeux. "Writing for the Broadcast Media." The University of Nebraska – Lincoln, © 1985. page 117. Chapter 4 Commercials and Announcements.

Language use suggestions were also provided as follows:

- Talk the audience's language. Choose words that express ideas in a clear, simple direct manner.
- Use positive action words. Stress urgency and immediacy. Select words with care.
- Do not overuse such verbal devices as alliteration, sibilants, fricatives and plosives.
- Make certain your grammar and spelling are correct.
- Simplify your copy. Make every idea as clear as you can.
- Remember the consumer's perspective.
- Avoid cliches, indefinite pronouns, and unnecessary numbers unless these help the audience remember the central sales message.
- Construct sentences carefully and with purpose.⁶³

Visualization suggestions were offered as well. The are as follows:

- Storyboard your message.
- Scrutinize visual sequencing. Make sure each shot and each scene builds logically.
- Eliminate shots and scenes that do not relate to the central message of the announcement.
- Know the creative potential. Be conscious of why each kind of shot is selected, how it is used, and what the effect of each will be.
- Remember the audio. Make the sound portion of the message complement, reinforce or counterpoint the video.⁶⁴

⁶³ Peter E. Mayeux. "Writing for the Broadcast Media." The University of Nebraska – Lincoln, © 1985. page 117. Chapter 4 Commercials and Announcements.

⁶⁴ Peter E. Mayeux. "Writing for the Broadcast Media." The University of Nebraska – Lincoln, © 1985. page 118. Chapter 4 Commercials and Announcements.

Section 6: Corporately Sponsored PSAs

Oftentimes non-profit organizations will look to large corporations to fund a public service announcement. The corporation will cover all production and distribution costs just as long as a logo or tag for the corporation is included in the PSA. Usually, a PSA will contain a tag at the end saying, "This PSA funded by [corporation name]." Or, the corporation's logo will appear at the conclusion of the PSA. Although this is a wonderful idea for non-profit agencies to look into, there is often a conflict of interest when it is sent to the television stations.

When the author asked the 50 television stations how they felt about corporately funded public service announcements, the response was almost unanimous. Television stations usually steer away from corporately funded public service announcements because the question arises whether the PSA then would become a commercial. Nancy Lee Grecco of Fox 53 said, "There is such a fine line when non-profits receive monetary support from large corporations. The problem arises when the logo at the end of the announcement or the tag is obviously selling the corporation. Then the spot automatically becomes commercial material. I suggest that the agencies do what they can to avoid corporate sponsorship *unless* the tag is very unnoticed by the viewer."

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North Carolina

WAXN CH 64 Kannapolis, NC
WSOC CH 9 Charlotte, NC
WBTW CH 3 Charlotte, NC
WFVT CH 55 Charlotte, NC
WHKY CH 14 Hickory, NC

Virginia

WAVY CH 10 Portsmouth, VA
WPEN CH 62 Hampton, VA
WPXV CH 49 Virginia Beach, VA
WTKR CH 3 Norfolk, VA

Georgia

WATC CH 57 Norcross, GA
WTBS CH 17 Atlanta, GA
WUPA CH 69 Atlanta, GA
WATL CH 36 Atlanta, GA

Florida

WBFS CH 33 Miami, FL
WPLG CH 10 Miami, FL
WTVJ CH 6 Miami, FL
WBSV CH 62 Sarasota, FL
WWSB CH 40 Sarasota, FL

Massachusetts

WBZ CH 4 Boston, MA
WCVB CH 5 Needham, MA
WFXT CH 25 Dedham, MA
WHDH CH 7 Boston, MA
WLVI CH 56 Boston, MA
WMFP CH 62 Boston, MA
WSBK CH 38 Brighton, MA

New Hampshire

WNDS CH 50 Derry, NH
WPXB CH 60 Manchester, NH

Washington, DC

WJLA CH 7 Washington DC
WTTG CH 5 Washington DC
WUSA CH 9 Washington DC

Maryland

WDCA CH 20 Bethesda, MD
WBAL CH 11 Baltimore, MD
WJZ CH 13 Baltimore, MD
WUTB CH 24 Baltimore, MD

Connecticut

WBNE CH 59 New Haven, CT
WFSB CH 3 Hartford, CT
WHPX CH 43 New London, CT
WTIC CH 61 Hartford, CT
WTNH CH 8 New Haven, CT

Pennsylvania

WCAU CH 10 Bala Cynwood, PA
WGTW CH 48 Philadelphia, PA
WPHL CH 17 Philadelphia, PA
WPSG CH 57 Philadelphia, PA
WTVE CH 51 Reading, PA
WPCB CH 40 Wall, PA
WKBS CH 47 Wall, PA
WBGH CH 59 Pittsburgh, PA
WCWB CH 22 Pittsburgh, PA
WJAL CH 68 Chambersburg, PA

New Jersey

WOCC CH 8 Cedar Brook, NJ