MEDIA SKILLS AND STRATEGIES

In order to maximize media success, we need to:

- Develop an understanding of the basic elements needed to get *solid media coverage* for the World AIDS Day or PJM event in your community;
- Understand what is "*newsworthy*" and how to *frame* the PJM message to the media;
- Be able to effectively *pitch* your PJM related story and to prepare *spokespeople* to speak to the media;
- Be able to develop a good *press list* for your area and develop *relationships* with reporters; and
- Know how to write and use *press releases*.

But is it NEWSWORTHY?

To grab press attention, your story must be *newsworthy*. News hooks "hook" the attention of a press person. This list of hooks can spice up your story and help you score press. You can adapt the national materials of the PJM into local newsworthiness with these hooks:

CONTROVERSY sells stories. Frame the controversy to put the opposition on the defense.

DRAMATIC HUMAN INTEREST. Include the stories of real people, their victories, tragedies, and adventures.

TRENDS. Stories that suggest new opinions, behavior patterns and attitudes. Three is a trend; find at least 3 examples to assert that a new trend is emerging in HIV/AIDS.

TIMELINES/CALENDAR. Captures something coming up on the calendar. Focus on the major PJM events, including the build up to December's mobilization in Atlanta, GA.

NEW ANNOUNCEMENT. "Unprecedented" or "groundbreaking" or "first-ever" Reporters are only interested in new news, not old news. Make your news fresh, even if you've known about something for a while... or…

FRESH ANGLE ON OLD STORY. Take an old story and put a fresh twist on it – what's the most surprising part of what you are working on?

LOCALIZE A NATIONAL STORY (and vice versa). Focus on how the national PJM is important at the local level (i.e., local HIV/AIDS issues, particular policy concerns at the local level connected to national policy concerns – see section on *PJM platform* for more specific ideas).

ANNIVERSARIES/MILESTONES. One year later, one decade later. Use time markers to show success and progress.

PROFILES AND PERSONNEL may feature individuals, community leaders, or galvanizing spokespersons who may become news themselves because of their fascinating stories.

SPECIAL EVENT. A big conference, rally or gathering. Frame the event to capture the issue and importance. (i.e., the national *Prevention Justice Mobilization* in Atlanta).

RESPOND AND REACT to news others have made (i.e., loss of public housing and/or gentrification – how does this help drive HIV rates?).

CELEBRITY. If you have a nationally known celebrity on your side, make sure they are included in the story.

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS. Do you have unlikely allies coming together in solidarity over your issue? Highlight them in your story.

THE *REAL* PRESS WORK: Media Infrastructure and Press Lists

When we think about media, we often visualize images of people speaking on camera, or the "perfect quote" getting into a story on the front page. But much of the real work of media is about organizational systems and materials we use to amplify our voices.

Every organization doing media work should have an organized **list of reporters**. It's important that you capture and track all relevant reporter information and keep your list updated.

When creating your own media database, be prepared to invest enough time in the research and data entry so your database is complete and has all the information you will need when you are pitching stories to reporters. Here are some tips to remember as you begin your media contact research:

Be a media consumer
It's difficult to succeed as a media activist when you don't know which stories the media are covering. To be a part of the media dialog in your community, you must follow the conversation. So watch your local news, listen to talk radio and read your local daily or alternative newspaper. Observe how they are framing the stories, and if those frames present an opportunity for your organization to offer your perspective on the dialog.

Watch bylines
Pay attention to "bylines" – a line designating who wrote or produced the piece. Start noticing the names of journalists attached to stories – who is covering what, who favors what type of story, who is on what beat. When watching TV or listening to the radio, write down the name of the producer or correspondent. Clip print articles and enter the byline into your database. Focus on those stories that have crossover interest to HIV/AIDS (i.e., health, politics, civil rights, LGBT issues, community activism, etc). You can later pitch a reporter by saying: "Last week you did that piece on so-and-so. I thought you might be interested in this story."

Pick up the phone
Get to know who works where in the newsroom. Pick up the phone, call and ask who covers what beat at your local media outlet. Enter the names into your database. Visit the newsroom or broadcast station when they have public tours. Learn your way around the newsroom and you will become a more effective media activist.

Make contact when you see reporters
Reporters are part of the community, so when you see them during their private time or covering another event, introduce yourself to them and exchange information or business cards and add to your database.

Swap lists with colleague organizations
Share your media research with coalition partners and allied organizations – they may have lists that can build on yours and vice versa.

Capture reporters who contact you
When a reporter calls your office, it's important that you get their full contact information and enter them into your database. Given that these reporters have expressed an interest in your work and your issues, it's likely that these folks would be more receptive to your ideas when you are proactively pitching a story.

Don't forget alternative/independent and community media
As part of your media database mix, include media serving communities of color, youth media, campus media, business media, gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender press, progressive press, alternative radio/TV and cable, 'zines, websites, and other independent media. Your stories might be a great fit for these media outlets, and these outlets can be a very effective way for you to reach specific target audiences.

Expand and prioritize your database
Add all the contact information into a database, including phone and address so you can print in label format for mailing. Do not forget to include e-mail addresses so you can send releases via e-mail. If you have a fax machine with broadcast fax capability, enter fax numbers for your key media.

Once you have developed your database, ***prioritize it*** so you can contact media in the most effective manner. You may not have the resources to personally contact all the reporters all the time. Once your database is up and running, you will want to:

Create a sub-list of your top five to 10 reporters
Develop strong personal relationships with this cluster. They get the priority treatment. Keep their names and numbers handy at all times. These are the first to get breaking news calls, pitches, press kits and briefings. Stay in regular contact with them. Have lunch or coffee with them sometime during the year.

GETTING IN THE NEWS: Events, News Releases, Op-Eds, and Letters

Press Conferences Vs. Media Events

Press conferences usually involve controlled, formal settings featuring official speakers delivering scripted comments, with a questions and answers session following. They are often called to respond to some news development, such as releasing a statement, releasing a report, or making a newsworthy announcement.

Media events usually feature more spontaneity and contain an element of staging, drama, color, action, and surprise. Media events usually feature more photo opportunities and are more attractive to television.

While press conferences are usually easier to manage and control information and the message at a press conference, they can also be too serious and at times boring. Media events are more spontaneous and dramatic but harder to manage the many elements and control the message.

Staging Media Events And Press Conferences

Only hold press events when you have news
Reporters dread news events in which no news is made. *Ask the hard question – is it newsworthy?*

Decide whether you need an event or not
Depending on your story, a well-placed pitch phone call to a reporter, resulting in a feature article, may be good enough. Media events are a lot of work, so only organize them when necessary.

Determine who the news is for
Stage your event targeting your specific audience. That means where you stage the event, who speaks, what the banners look like, etc. will be colored by your target audience.

Good and bad news days
Schedule your event with the best timing for reporters in mind. Do not stage your events late in the afternoon or evenings when many reporters are on deadline. Mondays are not preferred because offices will be closed over the weekend and you may not be able to reach key reporters in the few days before the event. Fridays may not be good either because the story will likely come out in Saturday's media – the least read issue of the newspaper.

Late morning is good for a press conference; lunch hour if you are trying to attract participants to a rally; and midweek is good when other news may be slow. The reality of your organizing may mean you have to do it at other times, of course. If you must stage a rally after work, for example, at least do it during the evening television news so the stations can send cameras for live coverage. If on the weekend, make sure weekend reporters/crew know about the event.

Avoid being bumped
Check for competing events and beware of scheduling your news events on days when other major news will be made. Check community contacts and calendars for what else is happening. Call around to other groups to see if they have anything scheduled.

Keep the event short
About 30-45 minutes is the length of a good press event, especially press conferences. Major rallies may go on longer, of course, but reporters will likely get their stories soon enough after the first few speakers and then head back to the newsroom.

Rallies and marches
If your event is a major march, rally, or similar gathering, stack the first three speakers with your key spokespersons and instruct them to communicate the messages from the stage. After the first few speakers, reporters tend to go and interview other people.

Location
Make your event convenient to reporters, yet dynamic and appropriate in terms of backdrop. The farther the event is from the newsroom, the less likely reporters will be to come. Make the location appropriate to the issue. The backdrop should symbolize and frame the news, not distract from it.

Check reporters in and get them what they need
You will want to have a few people assigned to "press duty." They will keep an eye out for reporters and camera people and can ask them to sign in at a check-in table at both press conferences and media events. Hand them a press kits and tell them you can answer any questions or introduce them to people to interview.

For big outdoor rally-type media events, inform reporters in advance the location of the press area – typically near the stage or the command center. Hang a big sign nearby that says “MEDIA.” At big events, section off a media area (often called bullpens), where reporters can conduct interviews, talk with sources, and generally hang out. This is a good place to have water/refreshments and a spare cell phone. Control access to this area, and run your featured speakers through this area for interviews. But don’t bother with all this for a smaller event – just identify the media as they come in, make sure they are getting the information they need, and stay close by during the event in case they have any questions.

Writing a News Release

Other than the telephone, press releases and media advisories – often lumped together in the term “news releases” – are the basic methods of communicating your news to reporters.

Starting at the top of the page, all releases should contain:

- Either *For Immediate Release* – meaning the information can be used as soon as the reporter gets it; or *Embargoed* – meaning the reporter cannot use the news until the date specified on the news release.
- The date the release is distributed.
- Contact name(s) and number(s), including cell phone numbers.
- Your organization’s logo (at the very top).
- A headline. Most reporters have about 30 seconds to scan a news release. If you don’t catch their attention in the headline, your news won’t get covered. The headline can be up to four lines long, centered, in bold, and written in all caps. The headline should capture the larger frame of the news, communicate a sense of drama, and pull reporters into the story.

Media Advisories

You can get sample media advisories for the PJM at www.PreventionJustice.org.

This is a short, concise piece advising the media of news to be made. The media advisory is sent out before an event or before news is made.

In media advisories, list the “Five Ws” after the headline and lead, framing paragraph:

WHO: Who is announcing the news? This will probably be your organization or coalition. A brief list of speakers and co-sponsors may also be included here.

WHAT: What is being announced: a media event, rally, protest, press conference, or release of a report.

WHERE: Location, address/directions

WHEN: Date/Time

WHY: Your key message. It’s why you’re making news.

If your event will feature strong visuals, tip reporters off to the photo opportunities at the end of the media advisory, which is particularly useful for television.

Press Releases

You can get sample press releases for the PJM at **www.PreventionJustice.org**

This document is longer than a media advisory but rarely longer than two pages. A press release is usually written like a news story and summarizes your news.

- After the headline, the first paragraph (the lead) is very important. This is the summary paragraph that communicates the most important components and frames the issue for maximum media impact. It must capture the reader's attention.
- Write the remainder of the press release in decreasing order of importance. The most important news goes at the top, the lesser details below.
- Frame your news – establish its significance and impact, and your position – by the end of the lead paragraph. At the latest, your news should be framed by the end of the second paragraph. By the third paragraph you should move your key messages.
- Include one or two sound bite quotes in the press release.

End both media advisories and press releases with the marks ###, which lets journalists know that the release is over. If your release is more than one page, write "more" centered at the bottom of the page, and write "Page 2" with a subject reference at the top left corner of the next page.

Pitching a Story

You should call a reporter to pitch your story after sending them a media advisory or press release. Do not call them when you know they are on deadline (usually late afternoon). Late morning (about 10:30 am) is a good time to call. Earlier in the week is better. It is not advised to call on the weekend unless some very big news is breaking.

Offer reporters something they need
The press is always in need of a good story – and you are in a position to give it to them. Half of the success of the pitch call depends on your confidence level; the rest will follow with your messages and how you frame the issue.

Keep it brief
Reporters do not have time for long calls. You will only have a few minutes to get their attention and must capture their interest immediately. Make sure your pitch contains the who, what, where, when, and why. Do not call simply to ask if they received your media advisory. Pitch the story, reference the advisory or release and offer to send it again if they haven't seen it.

Begin with reporters you know
Target specific reporters with whom you have relationships. If they have done a piece on your issue or a similar subject, reference their prior work. At the very least, target reporters in the relevant section of the paper. If you must make a cold call, ask the general assignment editor or producer whom you should contact.

Offer a hook
There are many tricks for making your story exciting: dramatic human interest, controversy, local angles, anniversaries and other major events, etc. Frame the story so it has greater significance, drama, timeliness and impact for more readers, viewers, and listeners.

Express enthusiasm
If you aren't excited about the story, the reporter won't be either. But don't go overboard with your enthusiasm. Give reporters the necessary information, offer to provide more, and get off the phone.

Be timely, not obnoxious
If you sense that a reporter is rushed and stressed, offer to call back later. At the very least, acknowledge their situation: "Listen, I know you're very busy – do you have a moment or should I call back later?"

Close the deal
Ask reporters whether they are interested in your event and whether they can come. Most will not immediately commit over the phone but will think about it.

Have one or two back-up pitch angles
If it becomes clear that a reporter is not interested in your pitch, consider a different angle. Perhaps the reporter cannot attend an event, but would be interested in interviewing a speaker at another time. A reporter might respond better to the local human-interest angle of the PJM than the national policy angle, for example.

Preparing Spokespeople

Being a good spokesperson takes practice and preparation. Spokespeople not only are messengers, but they symbolize the professionalism of your organization and communicate the urgency of the PJM.

They key to being a good spokesperson is to have your messages in mind well before standing in front of a camera, microphone, or reporter. Self-confidence, poise, and composure are essential.

In most organizations and coalitions, staff leadership and community members affiliated with the organization or affected by the issue act as spokespeople.

To prepare a spokesperson, here are some basic tips:

- You have something important to say, and you want people to listen. Build up your self-confidence and command attention.
- Image is important: Appear poised, in control, and knowledgeable. Relax!
- Have your key messages in mind *before* the interview. Add something personal before your sound bite to break the barrier between you and the audience.
- Don't be thrown off by reporters' questions, no matter what they ask. Discipline the message. Turn the question back to your key messages.
- Do not try to explain *everything* in your sound bite or interview. Stay on message.
- If you mess up, it's okay. Ask the reporter for another shot, unless you are live on the air.
- Practice!

Picking your spokesperson

Sometimes the messenger is just as important as the message. There are two kinds of spokespeople you should designate:

1. *Organizational leaders* – These spokespeople officially represent your group and can speak to any issue of relevance. This typically includes executive directors, key program staff, or committee chairs, or board members. Reporters should be able to contact these people at any time for a quote or background information. Make sure that reporters know how to get in touch with these people.

2. *Community members* – It is important to ensure that community voices of people living with HIV/AIDS are included in the media. Be mindful of all of the kinds of diversity – racial, age, sexual orientation, gender, class, and disability – that make up your community, and whether those people are being prepared to talk to the media. Community spokespeople represent the “real people” affected by the epidemic, and their dramatic personal stories can be very persuasive.

Once you have picked your spokespeople, make sure they are on message and understand the PJM platform and goals. Make sure every spokesperson has the talking points relevant to your event and has the opportunity to practice.

OPINION EDITORIALS AND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

You can use the media to communicate the PJM message directly to your audience without relying on reporters to write stories using op-eds and letters to the editor.

Opinion Editorials (Op-Eds)

- Make them personal, not academic
- Determine who’s the best “voice” for the op-ed.
  Director of ASO? “Regular” community member? Notable community leader? PWA activist? Local or national celebrity?
- Keep it brief and to the point
  Usually 500-800 words, but check op-ed length restrictions in your local paper. Use short sentences and short paragraphs.
- Compose an engaging lead paragraph to catch readers’ attention.
- Frame the issue in the first few paragraphs.
- Communicate your messages soon after framing the issue. One entire paragraph should be just your messages. Summarize messages again at the end.
- Elaborate on your points and keep the reader engaged. Don’t go off on tangents or use lots of words or phrases that only AIDS activists would know.
- Cite compelling examples that reinforce your position.
- Make the op-ed timely.
- Pitch the op-ed to the opinion editorial or editorial page editor. Call first to see the level interest; then fax it over with a cover letter. Do not submit it to competing media unless it is rejected first.
- Ensure that the editor has your name and number.
- Aim for running the op-ed as close to your news event as possible.

Letters to the editors

- Make them short and concise.
  Usually 150-200 words but check local paper restrictions.
- Write no more than three or four short paragraphs.
  First paragraph cites any previous coverage of a story. The second paragraph introduces something personal and states your side of the story. The third paragraph moves the key messages – the same ones communicated in your press release.
- Personalize the letter.
- Submit the letter via postal mail, fax, or e-mail, depending on local paper's preference.
- Consider writing "boiler plate" letters.
  Compose standardized letters that community folks in your "letter tree" can customize with their own personal information.
- Encourage members of your community to write letters.
- Remember that letters are just one tool in your media strategy.
- Getting a letter printed is valuable, but not as valuable as a front-page story or an op-ed.

Much of this media skills information was adapted from:

- *Spin Works! A Media Guidebook for Communicating Values and Shaping Opinions.*
- SPIN Project's *Train the Trainers Kit* (2004).

BACKGROUND RESOURCES ON MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

Spin Project: www.spinproject.org

The Ruckus Society Media Training Manual: www.ruckus.org/resources/manuals/media/index.html

Turn on the News – ActionMedia: www.turnonthenews.com

We Interrupt this Message: www.interrupt.org

For training: Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project: www.champnetwork.org

USING EVENTS TO BUILD A BASE OF SUPPORT: TURNOUT AND TRACKING

TURNOUT AND BASE-BUILDING

Imagine all the work you need to do to pull off a local event. Now, add in twice as much time spent on actually getting people to come to your event. Turnout is often the most time-consuming component of a successful local event. An organizing committee or organizational network can be extremely helpful for doing effective turnout.

And we want to make sure all your hard work will not have to start all over the next time you need to have an event, or in case of the need for quick mobilization around a Prevention Justice issue! Building a “base” simply means you know who is interested in doing more with your group, and you know how to contact them.

Why should people want to come to your event?

When you developed your event program, you answered that question. Turnout is the way to communicate that answer to people you would want to attend. Some people might be attracted to the whole event or the general idea; others may want to come to see a particular speaker or performer or to meet new people. Ideally, the event should address their practical needs and be appealing to them. Let people know what’s in it for them.

Keeping Track of Keeping Count

To transition from just outreach to systematic turnout and base-building, we need to keep track of what we are doing. Here are some ways that your group can keep track of your base-building work over time:

- A list on a clipboard that gets saved from event to event
- Index cards for each person you contact, with records of their involvement.
- Computer programs:
    - Excel Chart (this is called a spreadsheet)
    - Organizational Database (this is a great resource if you have it or can get help developing it)

The Simple Math of Turnout

- In order to get 50 people to show up when there hasn’t been ongoing work on an issue or on this type of event, you need to invite 150-200 people.
- If the names are cold (people you don’t know well or who are new) and people are not familiar with the group or issue, you will need more names.
- 30% of the people you call will not be home; 15-20% of the phone numbers will not work; 25-30% will be no’s; 25-30% will say yes. Of those who say yes, only a small percentage will actually show up
- Out of 20 people talked to, nine will say yes and 3-4 will show up.

The Rule of Three

You may have to use the Rule of Three: *even your best friends may need to hear or read about an event three times before they are sure to attend.* This could consist of a flyer in the mail, an email invitation and a personal phone call. Or it might be an announcement they hear at church, an offer of a ride from a case manager, and an invitation from a peer to go together.

Phone Banking

Phone banking can be an extremely effective turnout tool. All you need is accurate phone lists, available phones, volunteers and an accessible script.

Ask organizations if they will phone bank for the event, if they have a volunteer base to do so and available phones in their office. The volunteers can call members of the organization to ask them to come to your event.

It is helpful to prepare a script, or a "rap," that callers can use to make sure everyone is getting the basic information. Check out the sample PJM script for ideas. You can have different scripts for different phone lists or organizations to focus more on what will motivate particular people to come. There may be homebound people who would like to help who can also make calls to ask others to come, and they may be able to talk about how the issue relates to them personally. A rap is like a map. All raps should have these elements:

1. Introduction: Identify yourself and the group
2. Statement of conditions and the need to take immediate action.
3. "There is hope because people can make a difference and we need people's help because we can't do it alone."
4. What you can do: Come to a meeting, a rally, etc.
5. Commitment: "Will you join us? Yes or no? We are counting on you." (Even though some people may say maybe, we should still push a bit to make that a yes…)

Sample Rap

1. Hi, I'm Sarah. I belong to the Get Smart Ohio coalition.

2. We're fighting for Prevention Justice, meaning we are confronting the unjust conditions and policies that make it hard for some people to protect themselves from HIV or get care if they are infected.

3. We're working to get the state legislature to pass a bill that puts aside money in the state budget to pay for comprehensive sex education.

4. If we work together, we can get this funding for sexuality education so young people in our communities can learn how to protect themselves from HIV and other STDs.

5. We're asking people to join us next Wednesday night at 8 pm at Town Hall to hear Representative Smith talk about the Get Smart Ohio mobilization.

6. We'll learn what we can do to make a difference - we need all our voices to be heard. Will you join us?"

KEEPING COUNT

Tracking, follow up, and accountability are very important when base-building. Tallies, reminder calls, and no-show calls will help keep track of who supports your work:

Tallies: Keep track of how many people we can expect to come:

- How many said yes
- How many said no
- How many people in total did you reach, how many times did you try to reach each one

Reminder calls: People forget. Remind them with a call the night before your event.

No-show calls: If someone says yes but doesn't show, call them politely afterwards to find out why and to say you'd like them to come to a future events

Volunteer Outreach Committee
If you are going to continue to have events, you can form a volunteer group from different organizations and communities that focus on turnout. Be sure to honor their important work just as we would any volunteer.

Friendly and outgoing people who are well respected by their community or organization make great turnout volunteers! Make sure you know how much you appreciate their work.

One-on-One Contact
This is usually the most effective. People are more likely to listen to someone they know or with whom they have something in common.

Organizational Outreach
Identify organizations and institutions that are already connected to large groups of people. When organizations do commit, ask them to choose a number as a goal of people they will get to the event. It is okay to ask them what methods they will use to reach these numbers, and to offer help.

Even if an organization will not commit to helping with large-scale turnout at first, ask them to send a few representatives to the event. If they see it goes well, they may be more willing to help more next time around.

Teach-In
A teach-in is a form of turnout that is a more in-depth presentation about the issues we are working on and why we are having a local event. It is a good way to let members of a group know more details and to invite them to increase their involvement as participants or volunteers at the event. If your event includes activist components, like an accountability session or an event that might include the media, it can be good to prepare people ahead of time through a teach-in.

Announcements
Ask people to make announcements at relevant events, office meetings, church, and other gatherings of many people. For members of faith organizations, an invitation from the spiritual leader of their group can be very compelling. Involving faith leadership in event planning can be a way to open those doors.

Tabling
Set up a table at place where you might see people who you want to come to your event. Tabling is a way to distribute information and engage in one-on-one dialogue.

Flyering
Flyering can be the third part of the Rule of Three, but not all three parts! Handing out a lot of flyers to strangers rarely gets people to come, though it may reinforce other outreach strategies.

Email and Internet
This can be a very effective outreach tool for people who use computers. However, make sure you use other outreach tactics so that you don't exclude people who don't use computers.

"Bring a friend"
When you talk with someone who says they will come, ask them to bring one or two other people with them.

Building the relationships for this base creates a visible process that people can help with – and that builds the power of your whole group. This also prevents all the contacts being centralized in one person's head or just in a computer without anyone knowing who the people really are or how they relate to the group.

More can be accomplished when people feel like part of an organized group. The level of comfort is increased, and people will participate and be involved in public actions when there is an identifiable base. People make a difference if you *go* to them - it's not enough to have a good idea or a strong issue.

Why Do People Get Involved?

People get involved based on personal interest or because of a crisis. American society does not encourage involvement - many people believe that their vote, their voice, or their involvement will not make a difference. The people are not to blame. They are not obligated to participate or work on an issue – it has to "meet them where they are at."

LOOKING GOOD: VISUAL PROPS FOR YOUR EVENTS

The Ruckus Society has great-looking protests. They say that *Creative, bold visuals make a great centerpiece for every direct action. They do much more than make your actions look good. They unify your group, amplify your message, invite people to have a personal interaction with your work, and provide a visual story through symbols that clarify the issue. If you integrate art into your campaign strategy and actions, you can make change irresistible.*

Irresistible change sounds pretty good, so let's talk about visuals.

A clear message gets even clearer with powerful, united visuals. Think of what you'd like your rally or event to look like on television or in a photo in the paper – it won't look that way unless you ensure that the camera will see that image no matter where it is pointed.

We can create this visual unity through stickers, T-shirts, banners, flags and signs:

Stickers
Contact us for free Prevention Justice stickers – just give us enough time to get them out to you before your event. We can also get you a template that you can use to make a small number of stickers with a color printer using sheets of stickers from an office supply store.

Signs
On our site, you can download sign designs that will print out to both 8.5'' x 11'' (letter size) and 11" x 17" (tabloid size) paper. You can also print these out as T-shirt decals on special decal paper available through craft stores.

Banners and Flags
These guidelines come from a fantastic brochure with helpful illustrations from the Ruckus Society. You can download it at www.ruckus.org/article.php?id=317.

Consider the Following:

- **Location**: Where and how will the banner be used? What are the environmental conditions (high winds, wet weather, etc)?
- **Size and Scale:** How large does the banner need to be to be visible, legible, and have an impact at the location where it will be used? A 30-foot banner could look tiny if the scale of the background is large enough. Scout the location before making the banner!
- **Message:** Keep it short and sweet. Test it out on a lot of people before you commit. Make sure it makes sense to your target audience and to the general public – not just to insiders.
- **Time:** Making banners takes longer than you think! Plan time for buying materials, construction, painting, allowing the paint to dry, attaching hardware and rigging the anchoring system.
- **Budget**: Is there enough money for the labor and materials involved? The budget may end up determining the size and location of the banner.

Laying Out Graphics

Old School Method:

1. Draw your banner image onto paper.
2. Lay the banner out on a table or the floor. Measure the length of space to be covered by the text.
3. Figure out how many units your text requires:
   - All lowercase letters, numbers, and spaces between words count as 1 unit except m & w (1 1⁄2 units) and f, i, j, l, and t (1/2 unit).
   - All capital letters count as 1 unit except M & W (1 1⁄2 units) and i (1/2 unit).
4. Divide the total length into the number of units needed.
5. Freehand sketch the letters onto the banner using a pencil or marker. Freehand the graphics in the space remaining, or use the grid method to transfer. (Draw a grid over your image on the paper, make a larger matching grid on the fabric, and transfer box by box.)
6. Fill in letters and graphics with spray paint or use brushes and water-based paint.

High Tech Method:

1. Create the graphic or text on a computer-based graphics program. Make sure your dimensions match the dimension of the final banner.
2. Hang banner on a wall. Project the graphic onto the blank banner using a digital projector.
3. Trace the graphics and text with permanent markers. It can be helpful to mark the color of each shaded area onto the banner as you trace.
4. If using spray paint, leave the banner on the wall and fill in the graphics with spray paint. If using water-based paint, spread the banner on the floor before painting.

Making and Using Stencils

1. Create: Make your stencil image- either on a computer or by hand. Remember to “think like a stencil” – don’t leave any white spaces (islands) completely enclosed by black areas. Create bridges. You will be cutting out all the black areas. When you’re done, print or photocopy the image onto regular paper.
2. Fortify: For T-shirt stencils, tape a piece of vellum, acetate or transparency paper to the paper with the stencil image using masking tape. For picket signs, glue the paper with the stencil image onto thicker card-stock using spray adhesive or a glue stick.
3. Cut: Using a sharp blade, cut out all the black parts of your stencil image, cutting straight through the card-stock or vellum. The sharper the blade, the better your stencil looks. Make sure to protect the surface you’re cutting on.
4. Repair: If you accidentally cut through one of the bridges, use a piece of scotch tape to re-attach it.

T-Shirts

1. Put newspaper or a piece of cardboard larger than the stencil size inside the T-shirt and lay it out flat.
2. Use spray adhesive on the backside of the acetate/vellum stencil and lay it onto the T-shirt where you want it, or just use masking tape to attach it to the shirt.
3. Load up your foam roller with fabric paint and roll away. Experiment with pressure. Apply liberally. Make sure you have an even coat.
4. Remove the stencil carefully. Allow paint to dry.
5. Heat-seal the shirt so the color doesn’t run. Lay a clean cloth or brown paper over the design and iron for a few minutes. If you’re doing multiple layered stencils, heat-seal in between each color.

Signs and Posters

1. Cut cardboard boxes down to desired picket sign shape. Get creative- let your shape work with your stencil image. Paint with background color using latex house paint and allow to dry.
2. Attach the cardstock stencil to the cardboard background using masking tape. For posters, you can also use colorful posterboard or poster paper for the background.
3. Hold spray paint can six to ten inches away from the stencil at a 90-degree angle to avoid under-spray and keep your edges sharp. Use paint sparingly. Wear rubber gloves and a mask, paint outdoors, or in a well-ventilated room.
4. Carefully lift stencil off of cardboard background. Let paint dry.
5. Attach sign to wooden stick using a staple gun. You may want to sandwich two signs around one stick so the text will be legible from both sides. You can seal the two signs together with masking tape.