4-H Public Relations: A Blueprint for Expansion

a little book with big ideas
for promoting and expanding
youth serving organizations

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With Special Thanks...

We express heartfelt appreciation to Don Bagin, our graduate program professor, who helped us truly believe in the power of planned, honest, on-going and two-way public relations.

Dr. Bagin, Rowan University Professor of Communications, awakened that belief with dynamic, practical and inspiring teaching in the graduate program he established.

Much of what you will read in this book are the philosophies we learned as graduate students two decades ago and adapted to our 4-H programs.

As a professor and friend you have had a profound influence on our lives, and for this we are ever grateful. Thank you.

4-H Public Relations: A Blueprint For Expansion

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FORWARD

THE PUBLIC RELATIONS BLUEPRINT

There's a great deal of research to support the fact that the general public, although aware of 4-H, knows very little about it. That statement seems enough to support the need for a 4-H public relations program for every county throughout our country.

4-H is a sterling program, and we know it. Our 4-H volunteers, members, parents and supporters are dedicated and loyal...second to none. So what's wrong?

How come so many people don't know what we're all about? The answer is complicated and deeply rooted in the history and philosophy of the early beginnings of Extension and 4-H. However, the reason is most likely a lack of a structured, systematic public relations program.

Learning how to be your own public relations practioner can help your program flourish and expand. This book provides a blueprint for you to follow in understanding how good public relations efforts can plug many program gaps caused by shrinking budgets, shrinking staff, expanding duties and increased mandates.

CHAPTER I

ALL ABOUT PUBLIC RELATIONS

To clearly understand how an effective public relations program is important to your 4-H youth development efforts, you first need to unravel the marketing mystery. And marketing can be pretty simple and straightforward.

Marketing. . .No mystery !

The term **marketing** may be among the most overused and misused word in the English language. Everything from a newspaper photo to a free hamburger coupon is called marketing. Actually, marketing is a science so specific in the delineation of its functions that universities grant degrees in the field. So what is this science of marketing all about and how does it impact on our 4-H programs?

For centuries the mousetrap theory was all that it took to sell a product. "Build a better mousetrap and the world will beat a path to your door." As the world grew, the better mousetrap needed a crier to tell about it, both to people who knew nothing about mousetraps and to those who already used a different one...but most **importantly** to people who wanted to catch mice!

For many decades marketing really did only apply to what large and small businesses did to sell their wares. But in the last 25 years educational institutions and non- profit organizations have also learned the importance of marketing their programs.

The dictionary defines marketing as "the total of activities by which the transfer of title or possession of goods from seller to buyer is effected." Let's carry that definition a bit further and refine it to "the transfer of goods and services from provider to consumer or client." In fact, transfer of intangible services and information may soon exceed goods transferred.

Today, Extension programs certainly fall into this category of non-profit organizations that compete for the attention, time and money of clients and donors. 4-H and all Extension programs have found a need for good, sound marketing practices to ensure that the public understands, uses and supports their programs.

Now let's focus on what the science of marketing is and is not. By gaining a clear picture, we can better understand where our efforts to transfer programs to clients fall under this big umbrella of **marketing.**

Although marketing has become more and more sophisticated as the years have passed, its basic premise remains the same; something to sell, the right people to tell and priced to sell well.This, in marketing jargon translates into the "P's" of marketing.

Their numbers may vary, but the three foundation blocks are always **PRODUCT...PROMOTION... PRICE.** Other "P's" may supplement the foundation blocks, including Place, Position or Post Sales Service. But the first three remain the basic **triangle of marketing.**

Product, promotion and price must be in balance to work. If any one part of this formula is faulty, it will need adjustment. An example of a **Product** change was new Coke, which failed miserably with the public. So the company returned to the original formula now called classic Coke, and the public won!

Promotion decisions change the way a product is presented and the public is made aware of it. Ensure was first perceived and marketed as a food supplement for the gravely ill. Today this same product is promoted as a healthy nutritional supplement to a much broader audience, and sales have soared.

Price becomes an easily explained example of the marketing triangle. Many electronic and high-tech products were not marketable at their original cost until the prices dropped to create an expanded new market.

Now let's apply these "P's" specifically to 4-H and Extension.

Product in 4-H, and in Extension as well, is your educational program and its services. The first key to success is a superior program. Nothing replaces a quality product, especially for repeat usage.

PRICE in 4-H is a minimal dollar figure. So your 4-H product must be of high enough quality to justify the cost, which is time, effort, commitment and determination.

PROMOTION is the effort we make to have our program recognized and appealing to people in the marketplace. Often, many of us mistakenly refer to this as marketing. Remember, successful **marketing requires transfer of goods** or buying the product. The success of promotion can be measured by the **Attention....Interest....Desire....Action** sales formula, known as **AIDA.**

The keyword of course, is **action,** or purchase of product, without which promotion has failed. Much of what we do in 4-H public relations develops attention and interest and sometimes even creates desire. But too often the effort does not result in the action of **joining 4-H**.

POST SALES SERVICE is a fourth and very significant marketing "**P" when applied to 4-H and Extension.** In fact, post sales service is almost synonymous with internal public relations. It comprises all of the ways in which we serve our volunteers, 4-H members and their families**...**with respect, communications**,** assistance and reliability. Post sales service retains leaders and members-the sure path to program growth.

Develop and deliver an excellent educational youth development **product** available at a reasonable **price**. **Promote** with a good external public relations plan resulting in action (recruitment) and retain enrollment with outstanding **post sales service** (internal PR).

Public Relations...No Puzzle

Now let's take a closer look at how this marketing triangle (product, promotion and price) clearly relates to the public relations aspect of the 4-H program and ways in which you can transfer it to consumers. Public relations is actually one of the functions of the promotion part of the **marketing triangle**. Others might be advertising, sales campaigns or sales representatives.

Public relations is the science which tells, not sells a product. It is unique because it can also stand independently.

In other words, an organized public relations effort can be in place without a full marketing plan. You may not have much say over Product or Price, but you have almost total control over your public relations effort.

In order to develop a successful plan, you need to look at and understand your many audiences. Their needs can be quite different, and thus our approach and the desired results will not always be the same.To simplify this, we'll separate our many audiences into two groups...***internal*** **and** ***external*****.**

Internal audiences...who are they?

They're the people we work with on a regular basis.

- ❑ Volunteers
- ❑ Parents
- ❑ 4-H members
- ❑ Secretaries
- ❑ Receptionist and clerical helper(s)
- ❑ Colleagues
- ❑ County administrators
- ❑ Local legislators
- ❑ Maintenance personnel
- ❑ Advisory groups

Some communication tools that work effectively with internal groups include:

- ❑ Newsletters and meeting announcements
- ❑ Advisory group meetings
- ❑ Brochures and flyers
- ❑ Personal contact
- ❑ Workshops and training
- ❑ Telephone
- ❑ Personal letters
- ❑ Recognition

External publics who may have little knowledge of 4-H are equally important in your public relations plan because these groups and individuals can reach vast numbers of people with the 4-H message.

External audiences include:

- ❑ News media
- ❑ Radio
- ❑ TV
- ❑ Internet
- ❑ 4-H sponsors and program supporters
- ❑ Schools
- ❑ Civic and service organizations
- ❑ **Generally, anyone not in the 4-H family is external.**

Be sure to keep your external publics informed on a regular basis with event press releases, photo captions and feature stories. Getting to know key media people is essential. Ways to accomplish this will be covered in *Chapter Five, Media Matters*.

External publics such as sponsors, schools, businesses and other organizations should also be kept informed with program updates, newsletters, flyers and personal contact.

However, there is a vast difference in what we can expect from our public relations efforts as we attempt to meet the needs of both internal and external audiences. Generally, and there are always exceptions, the response generated from internal public relations efforts often result in **action** on the part of the individual or group.

Conversely, media efforts directed toward external audiences create **awareness** by spreading the message to large numbers of people and result in greater 4-H insight for your programs. Sometimes this results in action on the part of the listener or reader, but more often than not, it stops at the awareness stage. Both **awareness** and **action** are needed, important and will help your communication plans succeed.

Here are some well- chosen thoughts for establishing a solid 4-H communication program:

Public relations is as simple as a thank you note and as complicated as a four color brochure. It's as specific as writing a news release and as general as sensing community attitudes. It's as inexpensive as a phone call to an editor or as costly as a full page advertisement. It's as direct as a conversation between two people and as broad as a radio show reaching thousands of listeners. It's as visual as a poster and as literal as a speech.

Here my friends is the big question: What is public relations? It's a term often used...seldom defined! In its broadest sense, public relations is "Good work, publicly recognized." Believe me, there are no secret formulas--public relations is simply the group itself saying "this is who we are, what we think about ourselves, what we want to do and why we deserve your support."

Author: Larry Litwin, M.A. The Communication Institute, Rowan University, Glassboro, NJ

CHAPTER II

GETTING STARTED

Building a 4-H Philosophy

Most 4-H professionals have a particular vision or attitude toward their role as a youth development worker. Have you ever stopped to analyze what there is about 4-H that pumps up your adrenalin? Why are you "into 4-H?" Heaven only knows how many answers there are to these questions! And they're all probably valid if they fill some of your personal and professional goals.

Speaking of personal and professional goals, have you ever considered what there is about your job that stirs your passion? **What's your personal 4-H philosophy?** Your theory regarding your belief, attitude and concept about 4-H? Does your personal and professional philosophy also mesh with the mission of 4-H?

The 4-H mission uses a learn-by-doing approach that enables boys and girls to develop the knowledge, attitude and skills needed to become competent, caring and contributing citizens. This mission is accomplished using the knowledge and resources of the land-grant university system, along with the involvement of caring adults.

Your goals, your talents, your philosophy and your concept of the 4-H mission should essentially blend, in order for 4-H and you to mesh comfortably. Think about it. This is important, because 4-H is not a nine-to-five job!

So...we all pretty much agree that 4-H youth development is a non-formal, educational program for boys and girls as well as the best youth program in the world. Would you also agree that our customers are not only the kids, but volunteers and parents as well?

If so, then we can gain some important lessons in customer relations from successful businesses, because no business can afford to ignore its customers. In 4-H, our **business** is youth development and our **customers** are our 4-H members, leaders and their families.

An old story relevant to buffalo hunters comes to mind which relates closely to customer relations**...**

We are told that old buffalo hunters used to dismount and kneel on the prairie with one ear to the ground. In this position they could hear the movement of the buffalo at great distances.

Perhaps **we** need to leave our offices once in awhile and theoretically "stand in our prairie" with our ear to the ground. We need to listen to the talk of **our** prospective custoners--volunteer 4-H leaders, members and their families as well as advisory groups. These are the consumers who keep 4-H strong and vital.

One thing we all learn from working closely with adult volunteers, teens and youth is that we are obligated to address their concerns and needs. For if we don't, then we may lose them. Like the buffalo hunter, we need to know how to listen and to analyze.

Analysis is the foundation upon which successful 4-H programs are built. It's simply tuning in to our publics, which can help us look beyond today and into tomorrow. Actually, we deal with many different publics. So for now let's call them **customers**, because in 4-H we're really in the people business.

Do you think of your 4-H leaders, members and other volunteers as your customers? Perhaps this is a far cry from the traditional view you have held but consider that the dictionary says a customer is **"a person who purchases a product or service, usually systematically or frequently."**

An adult who volunteers to be a 4-H leader makes this decision to purchase the service of 4-H each time he or she holds a meeting.

How do you want to be treated when you go into a store to make a purchase? You probably don't think about it each time you shop, but the answer is found in four areas:

- ❑ You look for a reliable **product** to fit your needs.
- ❑ You look for **courteous treatment** from knowledgeable sales people.
- ❑ You want the store to be **well run, well stocked** and with **convenient hours.**
- ❑ You want **pleasant surroundings.**

Your 4-H leaders, families and club members should expect the same service from you, your staff and other colleagues:

- ❑ The **products** are the educational projects and programs we offer.
- ❑ The 4-H program should be **well run,** which is our job.
- ❑ The **sales people** are 4-H secretaries, 4-H support staff and ourselves.
- ❑ The 4-H office or meeting room should be **pleasant and functional.**

As professional 4-H youth workers, you need to constantly strive to develop a quality educational program. But as important as the program is, it's not enough.You must also strive to serve your 4-H family well by developing a sound, honest, continuing and two-way communication network.This must be based upon enthusiasm, good systematic program planning, a positive attitude and lots of patience!! As a result, you will meet your challenges with success.

Drafting a Plan

To get started with a plan, think of a public relations effort as a great journey. Any successful trip, especially a long one, needs a **starting point, destination, itinerary** and **map.** For without establishing where you are going and how to get there, the trip, if ever completed, may be slower and more difficult than necessary.

Decades ago AAA Travel Services taught us the benefits of formalizing the above elements into written plans called **Trip Tiks** that map out the whole trip. Note the word **written.** Somehow words inked on paper convey the purpose, order and commitment which bring success. Even the most creative thinking in the area of PR may well fail without a written plan. By definition, public relations is a **planned** two-way communication process.

Remember too, that you are actually doing two separate plans...one for internal audiences and one for external audiences. Think of them as the **local road** for the internal family who knows about the program versus the **interstate** for the public who is unfamiliar with where they are.

Now, based upon the four elements of **starting point, destination, itinerary** and **map**, develop a written plan tailored to your needs as you start out on your PR 4-H journey.

STARTING POINT...situation assessment.
Begin your plan by assessing your program's current public relations situation. Be brutally honest as you look at the volume, strength and effectiveness of your current PR effort. If it is next to nothing, you have nowhere to go but up!

Ask the following questions for **internal** audiences:

- ❑ Do they (leaders, parents, members) receive, read and understand newsletters?
- ❑ What is the rate of volunteer turnover?
- ❑ Is there a welcome system in place?
- ❑ How effective is new leader orientation?
- ❑ Do volunteers feel free to ask questions, call for help or discuss problems?
- ❑ Are families satisfied enough with 4-H to help sell it?

Ask these questions for **external** audiences:

- ❑ Do people in you area know about 4-H and is their perception accurate?
- ❑ What is the level of private sector support?
- ❑ Do legislators, decision makers and other organizations know about 4-H?
- ❑ How difficult is recruitment of both adults and youth?

Don't be discouraged with the scope of your external image, especially in large, metropolitan areas. It's difficult to achieve, but not hopeless!

In your assessment be sure to include both the strengths and weaknesses of your budget and your staff, because they affect your ability to promote and give post sales service.

Post sales service can reduce the **price** of the 4-H program for a leader. If we make it less time consuming, **cost** goes down. Also look carefully at your program, which is of course your product. Products may need to be adjusted or even dropped if the effort to promote them is too costly for the sale. We often find this difficult to do in 4-H! Programs and events sometimes hang on far too long.

DESTINATION...your goals

You now should have a sense of where you and your program are, so it's time to pick a destination---or set goals. Your destination on this journey depends upon
how far you believe your program can go by applying public relations techniques. Reaching a **long-range goal** takes time. So each leg of the journey also needs a destination or **short-term goal.** A trip across country needs a daily travel goal. Set realistic, achievable goals for your PR journey.

Base your goals on available resources. Setting your goal to double membership from 800 to 1600 in a year or two without a massive campaign supported by increased staff and a huge budget equals the folly of expecting to travel from New York to Los Angeles in a day without a jet plane.

Realistic goals encourage the day to day participation and perseverance needed for achievement. As always in the Extension philosophy, those who must work toward goals must help set them. Include staff, volunteers and others in this planning.

A sample of a realistic long-term goal for internal PR might be: **IN THREE YEARS, INCREASE NEW LEADER RETENTION BY 30%.**

Short-term goals:
Year 1- Establish exit interviews to determine why leaders leave.
Year 2- Improve orientation and service for new leaders.
Year 3- Revise special recognition programs.

ITINERARY...day to day activities

Establish routine daily activities to support short-term PR goals---anything from happy grams, welcome and goodbye letters, to a personal call to the new cable TV station manager.

- ❑ A check list will help assure they are being completed.
- ❑ Reminders to your staff as well as regular staff meetings will also help.
- ❑ Sometimes the itinerary must be changed to fit an unexpected situation. Detours are not uncommon in travel nor in public relations...but stay on track and follow your map!

Attention to all of these details add up to a public relations effort which will move your program forward on its journey to success.

MAP...The big picture with signposts and benchmarks.

How do you measure progress on a motor trip? You measure mileage on the map or look at markers on the road. So it is with a PR journey.Your short-term goals by month or year become the mile markers to measure progress. If they are not met, we must ask why. Is it a lack of effort or resources, or is a different tactic needed?

- ❑ No matter the reason, it's important to focus on the process of rechecking, trying again or redirecting.
- ❑ Checking the itinerary and distance traveled against the map mile markers becomes the evaluation so often missing in public relations.
- ❑ Measuring progress often allows us to change the itinerary or goal quickly enough to avoid delays in reaching the goal.
- ❑ The planning process may take substantial time, but it's worth it in the long run!

You, the professional 4-H youth worker, are much better equipped and in control of a PR effort than in a total marketing effort because PR requires minimal budget and maximum input from you and your staff.

But still, good PR doesn't just happen by being nice to people and having them think well of you and the 4-H program. Public relations requires a planned, on-going, honest and two-way communication program effort.

CHAPTER III

POLISH YOUR PROFESSIONAL IMAGE

People are Watching

This chapter emphasizes that we are seen when we don't even realize it and often overheard when we least expect it! We are almost always judged by our sincerity, dedication and concern. People watch, and they form opinions.That's just human nature.

But this by no means suggests you're at the center of attention. You (and all the rest of us!) aren't and certainly shouldn't be. The central focus of your attention and your job **is** and **should be** your clientele.

Nevertheless, the image you project must never be in question.You work with youth and adult volunteers, and they are among our country's most precious commodities. You should always be aware of the influence you might exert over the minds and behavior of your many publics, especially young people.

Always respect a volunteer's opinion.Think, look and act like a professional. Never, ever embarrass a leader or member. If you **win** a confrontation, then you might **really lose.**

Know About People, Places and Things

Be in the know about the people you serve **with** and serve **for**; about the geography and resources of your county; about your product (4-H) and the tools of your trade. It can make a tremendous difference in your image and how people respond to you.

PEOPLE are our business! But getting 4-H known and getting things done often depends on knowing key people. Start by learning more than the names of your co-workers.Take an interest in their pet programs and be on the lookout for how you can be of help to each other. This goes a long way with local as well as state staff.

This same concept also applies to key people in the county such as the sheriff or county engineer, as well as school officials.Get to know them and make yourself known. Become a face to go with the name in the directory.

Media people are a must to know! Oh, yes, their turnover is high, but nevertheless, be sure to learn their names whenever you can.

Let TV and radio staff know you can be on call to fill in if a previously scheduled interview guest cancels. You will be appreciated, and it puts 4-H before the public. This also works with service clubs and civic organizations. Bring an articulate club member or volunteer with you. They make terrific guests.

Send Clear Messages

"You're a 4-H **agent?** "

"What does **that** mean?"

"What do you **do**?"

"Do you get **paid** for this?"

How often have you been asked these seemingly simple questions? The questions may seem simple but the answers always seem so **complex!** How to reduce the explanation of a multilevel or multifaceted job to sixty words or less becomes an ongoing challenge!

Each of you defines your position, even your program, in slightly different and very personal terms filtered through your philosophy. Of course, many common elements exist such as ***land grant university, youth development, informal education and hands-on concept.***

How you combine and refine those elements makes the answer believable and **yours.** To begin developing your answer to what is 4-H or what do you do, read your mission statement. Review well-written brochures about 4-H and Extension. Also review any definitions provided by your department.

Now begin to write your own answers. Design your response message; one relating to your job and one for the 4-H program. If you can, work with a staff member or a colleague **--** or at least have them review the message. Not only can this improve the message, but it also becomes a team effort so needed for staff to buy into.

Feeling comfortable with the definitions allows you to tailor your response to your audience. It could be a sponsor, legislator, parent, teacher, prospective leader or even a blind date!

When you arrive at an answer with which you are comfortable, get to know it like your phone number. Use it, believe in it and almost have it memorized! You will never again hesitate or fumble for a clear explanation of what 4-H is or what you do!

Now take it to the next level. Be sure your staff supports and uses the message. Also, your written materials should be compatible with your explanation. Consistency counts. Worth it? You bet!

Nothing builds confidence like an in-charge person who knows what they're doing. As a bonus, this process can focus you and act as a kind-of imaging to help you achieve goals.

Be an Administrator

Carrying out administrative duties is yet another important part of your job. And it can be a confusing role.

Many administrators clearly direct, govern and deal in one-way communication. In the military, this woks well and is certainly efficient. And the same can be said for certain businesses. But when working with volunteers, your role as an administrator needs to be toned down. Certainly you have to direct and manage people, but more frequently it should be through two-way communication rather than managerial direction.

Perhaps one of the best ways to begin is to understand your audience's needs and wants. What's the best approach for accomplishing this? The answer is really quite simple...by questioning them and listening well. Leaders, members, parents and staff all need to be going in the same direction and this type of two-way communication can help you immensely.

So where do you start? If you're fortunate enough to have salaried support staff, take time to train them well so they truly understand their varied job roles.You both should work together in developing a position description. Also, regular staff meetings will keep you in a win-win situation and prevent small concerns from blossoming into big problems!

- ❑ One fact we must never, ever forget is that boys and girls, parents and leaders are all involved in the 4-H program because they choose to be. So let's always keep the red carpet rolled out for these dedicated volunteers. And be sure to think of them as your "customers." Pack your ego away! Sometimes it just gets in the way of the big picture and clouds our kinder, gentler and more rational thinking.

- ❑ Never lock horns with a parent or volunteer: You lose even if you prove your point. It just isn't worth it.

- ❑ As long as everything is legal and moral, try to handle difficult situations with patience, by listening and communicating and with as much empathy as you can muster. And remember, 4-H does have rules, guidelines and standards. You can always refer to these when a situation warrants it.

- ❑ Finally, you need to realize that the buck stops here... right at your desk! If it doesn't conflict with your personal code of ethics**,** it's easier to suggest that you may have misunderstood a situation.

- ❑ Try to find out if you can **right** the **wrong.** If all else fails, just say you're sorry. Often it works. And it may erase the bad feelings and allow everyone to move forward.

- ❑ Last thought. Once in awhile, you may really be caught between a rock and a hard place. Perhaps someone else can intervene or mediate the situation. At this point you might need help. But just a bit of advice**...** try to right the problem **before** reaching this point, because more often than not, you may end up losing a leader.

CHAPTER IV

PEOPLE RELATIONS

TLC for Volunteers—Hold on to What You Have

Recruitment of new volunteer leaders is certainly a critical issue for 4-H. But so is retention. Let's reflect on these statements. Perhaps the order should be reversed because efforts to **retain** leaders ought to be of primary concern! Research has shown that we lose almost one- third of our leaders each year. Families moving away is just one of many reasons for this.Yet with a built-in retention plan, we can retain many more leaders and clubs. Both recruitment and retention require consistent hard work on your part.

Marketing research on volunteerism reveals some important insights:

- The number one reason people don't volunteer is that no one ever asked them.
- People volunteer or contribute because 4-H appeals to their values.
- People want and have a right to know**...**"What's in it for me?"

Therefore, successful recruiting involves timing, tactics, imagination, intuition and innovation.The old fashioned knock-on-doors and pound-the-pavement determination can still work, especially if you've targeted the right door or pavement! And don't forget to ask!

After you've successfully recruited some fine 4-H leadership the real challenge begins. Imagine how hard you must work just to maintain a status-quo, if you lose one-third of your total membership each year. So you see, if you work hard at keeping what you have and continue to recruit new volunteers, then your program increases and you begin to reach greater numbers of young people.

A frequent excuse on the part of volunteers -"I'm too busy"- explains very little. Look over the following reasons why people quit. Do some of these statements hit home?

WHY 4-H LEADERS QUIT

- **Burn Out...**Too involved (too much, too hard, too soon).We need to move leaders along slowly.
- **Cool Out...**After we get leaders involved, we forget them. They're asked to do too **little.** Need to keep in touch throughout the year.
- **Pull Out...**Leader feels relied upon too much. Feels trapped..."I can't get out." Listen for vibes of desperation.
- **Boring...**No change, no growth, no progress. Leader continues doing repetitive tasks **(chairman of same committee or event year after year after year)**...but sometimes they love doing it and **do** want to continue...better **ask** !
- **Futile-Pointless...**Failure on our part in putting forth enough exigency i.e. needs, concerns, challenges... (**what we do must be of value.)**

- ❑ **It's over!...**Need goals, new ideas, innovations, challenges. Avoid feeling of "that's all there is." Must have on-going new projects.
- ❑ **Don't Feel Appreciated...**Thank your 4-H volunteers, appreciate them and show it! Use please and thank you even more than you're obliged to. How? Certificates, notes, trinkets and personal thanks.
- ❑ **Too Much Conflict...**Need dialog. Bring it out in the open. Talk helps to release tension and air conflict.
- ❑ **Opposition...**Someone may be urging 4-H leader to quit. Need to acknowledge the sacrifice made by spouse or family of 4-H volunteer. They may require understanding, thanks, recognition.
- ❑ **Disagree with a Decision...** 4-H leader involved should be heard and acknowledged. They need not win their case, but must talk it out.
- ❑ **It Wasn't Fun...** 4-H club leadership should be fun and volunteers also need other activities that are personally satisfying.

Dr. Peter S. Sandman, a former chairman of the Department of Humanities and Communications, Cook College, Rutgers University, shared his checklist of "Why People Quit". With a bit of latitude, and his permission, we substituted the term 4-H Leader for People.

Tap the base resources in your communities and strike a healthy balance in both recruiting and retaining 4-H volunteers. Begin marketing 4-H to new audiences and hold on to those great leaders you already have! They understand the philosophy and goals of 4-H.
Volunteer leaders help boys and girls develop a positive self-image. How? By giving recognition, teaching skills, imparting knowledge and showing kids they care.

And if you believe that good public relations is an honest, two-way, on-going communication effort, you'll realize all that need be done is to promote 4-H. Encourage your volunteer leaders to tell their friends and neighbors what **they believe** about 4-H and what **they do** as a 4-H leader.

Leader Recruitment Campaign

Here's a recruiting idea you may want to try, utilizing the skills and contacts of 4-H volunteer leaders. They're not only the heart and soul of the 4-H program, but they're also one of your best resources for spreading the 4-H word. 4-H leaders possess a great deal of knowledge necessary to conduct their own successful 4-H public relations and expansion campaign.

For example, here's a plan that has worked well...a promotion campaign called **Each One Reach One** or **Leader Find A Leader.**This concept is an easy and almost foolproof way to recruit more club leaders. Just think, if each 4-H leader found a potential leader, your county 4-H program could theoretically double in size!

This campaign kick-off could begin anytime.To be most effective, it probably should run for no more than one month. You could time it to conclude during National 4-H Week or during your annual awards or recognition event. Why not give it a try? Here's how it works:

Publicize the campaign using direct mail, radio public service announcements (PSA'S) and news articles.

Highlight its purpose, time schedule, suggestions for finding potential leaders as well as the recognition to be given at the close of the campaign.

Encourage leaders to consider friends, neighbors, relatives and acquaintances in trying to locate this "potential leader." No firm commitment is needed. It's only necessary for the potential leader to agree to talk with someone on the 4-H staff to learn more about 4-H and how easy it can be for them to become involved!

This can be one of the easiest, fastest ways to acquire new 4-H volunteers. And these new leaders are all friends, relatives or acquaintances of current 4-H leaders. Everyone knows **someone -** which is a good beginning for joining the 4-H family!

One more thing...once you gain a new leader, don't forget about them (review **Why Leaders Quit** earlier in this chapter). Start with a welcome letter. Be generous with phone calls as well as verbal and written thank-you notes. Inform them, recognize them and appreciate them. Remember, **retaining volunteers plays a big part in program expansion.** So...**thank them. Take their picture! And thank them again.**

Customer Communications--Tell Us, We're Listening

By now, we hope you agree that there's a critical need to weave public relations tightly into your 4-H program. You need to communicate to your many publics all the neat things that are going on in your program. Communication...that's what public relations is all about.

But good public relations is **telling,** not **selling** a program or idea. A viable 4-H program doesn't need to be sold. And in the long run, it will not work. But we do need to tell our various publics about all the good things that are happening to young people and adults as a result of their involvement.

Effective public relations also emphasizes the importance of gaining feedback and two-way communication. As 4-H Extension youth specialists, you must identify audiences and know how to listen to them. Too often, when you ask about communication efforts, you'll hear about radio shows, news releases and other one-way communication tools. And that's fine; it's even important, but you **need feedback.** Feedback helps you plan educational programs according to the expressed needs of your community.

Suggestions for Obtaining Feedback

- ❑ Establish a 4-H advisory council.
- ❑ Include questionnaires in leader newsletters.
- ❑ Listen to and have 4-H leaders participate in radio call-in shows.
- ❑ Include a question session at all 4-H leader and member meetings and workshops. There's an advantage to being at the meeting early and staying at the close for a few minutes even if just for casual conversation or questions.
- ❑ Establish a speakers' bureau. Teen 4-H ambassadors can speak at service clubs, civic groups and schools.
- ❑ Evaluate every educational program and inform participants of the result.
- ❑ Place suggestion boxes in accessible locations at countywide events and in your Extension office.
- ❑ Invite school administrators, sponsors and legislators to breakfast. Keep them informed of new 4-H programs and offer to share ideas.

Consider the following guidelines when planning a solid 4-H public relations program:

Honest-be truthful and never mislead your audience.

Two-Way-not only do you inform, but you must be kept informed and listen to opinions and expressed needs of others.

For All People-your audience is not just 4-H members and leaders. It's everybody!

Continuous-you must operate your two-way communications system every day of the year.

Touch of Class

You need not spend a great deal of money to implement a solid communications program. Just commit to mount a positive aggressive campaign of internal and external public relations.Yes, it is a challenge, because sometimes our actions fall short of our stated goals. Stay focused. Remember how much this can **enhance** your program.

Today's challenges are so different from those of even ten years ago. But you must be prepared to deal with new issues head-on.

Increased competition for children's time doesn't have to be a stumbling block--after all, there are still hundreds of thousands of non 4-H boys and girls throughout the country who can grow and learn and develop in positive ways through 4-H. And the cost of 4-H involvement is minimal, which is another one of our many selling points. The future is indeed bright!

Armed with a variety of positive public relations techniques, you can easily enhance and expand your county 4-H programs. Pay attention to both your **internal** and **external** publics.

Following are some low cost ideas that will help you keep in touch:

1. **Encourage feedback.** Provide a 4-H suggestion box in the lobby or somewhere else in your office. Or distribute return questionnaires to both 4-H and non 4-H audiences following major 4-H events.

2. **Run workshops for 4-H leaders and parents together.** There are many topics that would interest and benefit both 4-H leaders and parents of club members**:** Just to name a few**...**human relations, group dynamics, coping with stress and other how-to project sessions.

3. **Use the media.** Keep a steady stream of information about 4-H programs, special events, achievements and needs flowing to all the media that serve your community.

4. **Run an open house day.** Invite the public to come and see demonstrations and displays on current topics of interest to parents, other adults and youth. Brag a little! Have some give-a-ways handy. Use all kinds of visuals. Let the public know about Extension and its many free educational services.

5. **Establish 4-H community involvement.** Involvement in local and county government, roadside clean-ups, helping the needy...these are ideal projects for joint efforts.

6. **Invite political leaders, clergyman and other community spokespersons to special events.** And invite them back again. And again. But be sure you have a **purpose** for their presence.

7. **Launch a "program in the parks" event.** No park available? Use the fairgrounds, a school yard or the local shopping mall. Stage a book fair, 4-H poster exhibit, health and physical fitness performance, petting zoo or 4-H nutrition puppet show.

8. **Set up a telephone hot line.** A quick way to pass on an important message or deal with a campaign.

9. **Provide special services at PTA/PTO meetings to inform parents about 4-H.** Set up your prepackaged and informational 4-H card table display supervised by a 4-H leader or staff person. This is ideal for open house nights. Parents can stop by and chat, ask questions and pick up materials as they pass through the halls.

10. **Develop a 4-H packet for your welcome wagon.** Assemble packets of helpful, invitingly designed 4-H materials to distribute to new residents of your community.

11. **Establish 24 - hour communication.** Voice mail in your office can be so helpful for busy parents and others who can only call before or after office hours.

Try out that new idea you've been wondering about and Good Luck!

Sensitivity to Volunteer Needs

Volunteers are the backbone of 4-H...without them there *is* no traditional program. Can't argue with that statement!

But do you always act as if you believe it? Even more important, do you let your volunteers know how much you appreciate and need them?

You can tell volunteers you care in hundreds of small ways. Some are as casual as a "hello" at the supermarket. Others are as formal as the presentation of a leader pin or citation. But a planned effort of volunteer recognition and appreciation should kick-in with each volunteer from the moment they start as 4-H leaders.

- ❑ Send a personal welcome letter to each new volunteer. A letter from your county staff and the university also helps to make them feel a part of the larger 4-H family.

- ❑ Learn a volunteer's name as soon as possible. Nothing helps a person feel more at ease than being known by name. When possible, learn something about your volunteers**...**their hobbies, family, job. Be interested! You are in the ***people business!***

- ❑ Keep the sunshine flowing with greeting cards**...**get well, sympathy or new baby. Signed cards can be kept on hand in the office. They can be computer-generated, store bought, or on a little 4-H clover note. A special birthday card to a **teen member** may gain you a new **teen leader!**

- ❑ Send volunteers a happy gram (a 5"x 8" sheet that resembles a telegram) when something special happens, such as an honor received by a youth or adult in your program. No need for a secretary to type this message**...**a few handwritten words are fine and lots more personal.

- ❑ Be available to talk. Then be interested! Leaders' problems are your problems. If a 4-H staff person chats monthly with a leader, small problems may never grow into big ones.You can often learn far more in a five minute informal chat after a meeting than in the two hours at the meeting.

- ❑ Thank you notes are a must! It doesn't matter if you thank the same person for the same job for a number of years. It's important for them to know they are appreciated.

- ❑ Praise volunteers publicly from the podium, in news articles, on the radio and in newsletters.

- ❑ When a volunteer resigns for whatever reason, be supportive and understanding. Also, send a good-bye letter with good wishes and thanks. It will always leave the door open.

- ❑ Recognize any volunteer accomplishment or contribution no matter how small. Good strokes keep people feeling positive about 4-H and themselves.

Volunteers are truly the backbone of 4-H. If you remember this simple fact, especially if you feel impatient or cross with a volunteer, it becomes easier to apply the tender loving care which keeps leaders in the program.

Decision Makers and Support Groups

Many of the points we have made in relating to volunteers also holds true as we deal with decision makers and support groups.

Keep them informed about your program. There are many creative ways to accomplish this and your efforts will be appreciated. In the long run, it will help your program. Many of these people are very busy, and phone calls should be limited to important or critical topics.

Some ways to keep decision makers and support groups informed are:

- ❑ Periodic updates recognizing special achievements of both adult volunteers and youth.

- ❑ Monthly written reports mailed to elected county commissioners, key administrators and officers of special advisory groups.These are brief highlights of 4-H accomplishments. It's also a good idea to include the agricultural and family and consumer science agents' monthly updates as well.

- ❑ Prepare a professional Annual Extension Report. Briefly state specific goals and any new focus during the past year.This is usually a shared responsibility with the other Extension professionals in your county. It can be delivered or mailed to sponsors, advisory groups and 4-H supporters.

- ❑ 4-H supporters and sponsors, like everyone else, enjoy receiving public recognition. For example, take their picture with a 4-H boy or girl, present them with a 4-H mug for helping with a program or thank them with a meritorious service to 4-H plaque!

- ❑ And don't forget the obvious**...**like thank-you notes, happy-grams, prompt replies to requests and invitations to special 4-H events. When invited, supporters should have an important job to do such as present an award, recognize a top 4-H'er or announce state or national winners.

Use the talent of your members and leaders. Meeting and hearing their success stories sells the program. But before your 4-H'ers meet with decision makers and support groups, prepare them with pertinent information and answers to questions. Do whatever it takes to build rapport with these important people...support for the 4-H program lies in their hands.

Legislators

Helping legislators understand the goals and values of Extension youth work is essential.You will usually get much better support from an informed legislator.

But reality says that the ease of cultivating legislator support often exists in direct proportion to the population of the county. In low population counties, access to and informing legislators may be somewhat easier. Local mayors, county commissioners and even state assemblymen are usually more accessible than in heavily populated cities and counties. **But don't give up!!** You can make inroads - it just takes a bit more effort.

So, specifically, what public relations tasks do you think might best gain support for your program?

- ❑ All legislators' offices in your district should receive **your bimonthly or quarterly newsletter** and other significant reports. But don't flood them with mail! You'll defeat your purpose, and they just don't have time to read everything.

- ❑ When you invite them to a 4-H event, **ask them to help present an award** or speak on a relevant topic.

- ❑ Legislative budgets - local, county and state - are increasingly becoming more stringent. Perhaps an **annual report** can highlight how 4-H's value can be achieved at the lowest possible cost. Always include results and impact.

- ❑ Occasionally plan a **breakfast get-together** with your state or district 4-H administrator and local legislators. This is particularly important in keeping the lines of communication open between the university and the county or when an important topic arises relating to Extension.

- ❑ Try to learn which issues particularly interest a legislator. Whenever possible, fit 4-H into his or her picture. There are numerous ways in which 4-H can **contribute to a legislative goal.**

- ❑ Finally, cultivating legislative support, though of tantamount importance, should not carry political implications. It's in Extension's best interest to **remain nonpartisan.**

Networking

Networking is a buzzword which points out how a complex system of agencies and organizations address problems of youth. **How** we perceive our position and program function often determines how integral a part of the network we become. But like it or not, we **are** a part of it! It can be as simple as knowing your local scout executive or as time consuming as being the chair of a grant review board.

The PR mirror reflects the 4-H image in your county and how well people understand your program. For example, is 4-H only contacted to provide a petting farm for a political picnic or might someone in 4-H be appointed to a youth service commission? Yes, they're **both** important and necessary. Striking a good balance is what you want to strive for. If you're not in the network,
you're out of the loop.

Networking is part of external PR. It is how people outside the 4-H family perceive us. The important thing is to make networking serve as a PR tool**...**leading to a better understanding of 4-H Extension youth work by other agencies, while building resources for the 4-H program. Sometimes networking can lead to opportunities or valuable collaborations for special projects or grants.

The following are a few networking suggestions:

- ❑ Learn names and programs of other agencies and organizations.
- ❑ Make yourself and the 4-H program known.
- ❑ Always have business cards and be sure to use them.
- ❑ Find a reason to speak up about 4-H.
- ❑ If you're able, stay after meetings to chat. This can be important!
- ❑ It's okay to occasionally say no!

Collaboration

How do you, as a youth development professional, derive the most benefit for your 4-H program from collaborations with other youth and community organizations? Collaboration is a reality of being mainstreamed in today's complex world of multi-organizations.

In the early days of Extension, 4-H was recognized as **the** agency helping farm kids improve the quality of life for themselves, their families and rural communities. Today, Extension's broader goal of helping all youth grow into coping, caring, contributing citizens usually parallels that of other collaborating agencies. So make sure that your input is effective and the 4-H clover is recognized while maintaining positive relationships with collaborators.

Before you join forces on a project, try to have a clear idea of the **why, what and how** of collaboration. Understanding your motives, outcomes and cost will always improve people relations.

Answering the following questions can help you decide if and where you fit in:

- ❑ What makes you and 4-H able to help with this project?
- ❑ Will your participation tie in with or enhance the 4-H program?
- ❑ Is the project feasible?
- ❑ Is the project in line with your program goals?
- ❑ Who is in charge...especially of money?
- ❑ Who will get credit or recognition?
- ❑ What will it cost...in both time and money?

Your response to these questions can help provide the guidelines for collaboration or maybe even the decision to move forward or graciously back off. From a PR standpoint, collaboration can present several challenges**:**

First...keep the clover high profile while remaining cooperative.

Second...deliver what you promise.

Collaboration can help our public image and strengthen communications with other agencies, but only if **both** of these challenges are met!

Serving Schools

Keeping the clover visible in schools enhances 4-H program credibility and recognition. Remember, elementary school is where our target market spends 25% of their time. Also, be sure to involve private schools as well as home-schooled youth. They are often eager to utilize our programs. Interaction with schools is an important investment**...**it's where our potential members are.

THERE ARE SEVERAL WAYS TO MAKE 4-H'S PRESENCE FELT IN SCHOOLS:

- ❑ **Promotions and rallies** at schools can be important. Prepare an exhibit and recruitment display table during Back-to-School Nights. Ask a local leader to host it because they are usually known in the community. Be sure 4-H has a presence where other youth groups are also prominent.

- ❑ **Supply educational materials** to teachers on request and help as a resource, such as at Wellness Days, by providing information or a program on food and nutrition.

- ❑ **Offer information on member achievements** for school newsletters. At commencement or graduation award ceremonies be sure 4-H scholarships are noted along with all other student awards.

- ❑ **Learn as much as you can about your schools.** Be sure you have your county's most current school directory. Know administrators' names. If possible, attend (by invitation or request) superintendent or principal Round Table Meetings. Be seen, but listen to their issues and problems.

4-H enrichment programs provide an excellent entry into schools because 4-H is a university-based program providing an educational service. Seize the opportunity to introduce kids to 4-H!! If fourth graders don't know how and where to join 4-H after they see a 4-H school enrichment program, you've missed the boat.

Current emphasis on service learning at local colleges and universities offers you the opportunity to enlist the talents of students to help present school enrichment programs. But be certain that students are trained to teach the subject matter as well as promote 4-H.

Follow up on school programs with some communication to administrators. A note of thanks including a summary of what was taught can increase 4-H's visibility and value to the school system.

CHAPTER V

MEDIA MATTERS

Newspapers

Good press relations are essential to an effective 4-H program.You need to bring the 4-H message to the public, and therefore it is crucial to communicate effectively with news people. Newspaper coverage of 4-H programs and events is the result of a good working relationship with the media, particularly the beat reporter and the decision-making editor.

GOOD PRESS RELATIONSHIP BUILDERS

- ❑ Treat news people with respect.They, like you, are trained professionals in their field.
- ❑ Visit local newspapers and meet with the editors. Also get to know reporters on an informal, first-name basis.
- ❑ Occasionally, controversy may develop even with the most favorable press relations program. Keep a cool head and don't throw away all your good efforts with impulsive criticism.
- ❑ Find out what you can do to make a reporter's job easier. When do they want a prepared news release or when might they prefer a phone call or a fact sheet?
- ❑ Find out which newsperson to contact for **special** coverage.
- ❑ Know the deadlines of each paper in the area.
- ❑ Discover the best days of the week for releasing routine articles or feature stories. **The day after a major holiday is usually a slow news day.**

The following suggestions have been excerpted from the book: School Communications...Ideas that Work by Donald Bagin, Frank Grazian and Charles Harrison. Published by McGraw Hill .

SOME DO'S

- ❑ Always be available to give information. Give the reporter your home phone number and get his or hers.
- ❑ Be sure to let newspapers know if a scheduled event has been canceled.
- ❑ Always respond promptly to a reporter's inquiry. If you don't have the information available, or want time to think before answering, promise to call back in ten minutes. Then do so.
- ❑ Remember that when talking with reporters you are always **on the record...**even during informal and chance meetings.

AND SOME DON'TS

- ❑ Don't expect a newspaper to publish your news releases word for word. Some papers will rewrite them to conform to requirements. Others will shorten them for lack of space. That's their prerogative.
- ❑ Don't complain to an editor if a news release isn't published.
- ❑ Don't ask a reporter to see their story before it is submitted for printing. He or she may resent the implication.

- ❑ Don't ask a news reporter for clippings of a story after it appears. Go to a news stand and buy extra papers yourself.
- ❑ Don't ask a newspaper to return a photo except under unusual circumstances.
- ❑ Don't tell a reporter how to write a story. If you want to emphasize certain points, do so during the interview.

News Writing Mechanics

- ❑ Use 8 1/2" x 11" paper. Provide article on disk if requested.
- ❑ Type on one side of the paper only. Double or triple space copy to permit editing...and leave a comfortable margin on the sides of the paper.
- ❑ Place your name, address and phone number in the upper left-hand corner of the first page.
- ❑ In most instances, the story should indicate, "For Release**:** Immediately." This and the date sent should be in the upper right-hand corner.
- ❑ Start the story one-third of the way down the first sheet to permit the editor to write instructions before printing.
- ❑ Don't carry over an uncompleted sentence or paragraph to the next page.
- ❑ If the story contains more than one page, write "more" at the bottom of each page and identify the story at the top of the next page.
- ❑ Never include more than one story on a sheet regardless of length.
- ❑ Never hyphenate or split a word at the end of a line.
- ❑ Don't type the release in all capital letters and avoid underlining.
- ❑ Try to limit your paragraphs to no more than two sentences.
- ❑ Many paragraphs, especially those in the lead, should contain only one sentence.
- ❑ Allow for delivery time when mailing releases - at least 48 hours in advance of the deadline. Many daily papers request **at least a week or more lead time,** especially for articles including program dates and registration deadlines.
- ❑ Avoid stapling pages. Editors' fingers can be as sensitive as their nerves.
- ❑ When faxing, follow up with a phone call to make sure it was received by the right person.

Now you have the ***mechanics*** down pat. News writing ***skills*** are covered in *Chapter Six*.

The News Column

A newspaper column can be a great public relations tool! With a regular column you can:

- ❑ Put the program before the public on a weekly or biweekly basis.
- ❑ Build a following **(even those who don't read your column will know that 4-H is an active and vital part of the community).**
- ❑ Choose the news or topic.
- ❑ Become easily accessible for calls and letters.

A news column differs from straight news. It usually emphasizes **why** and **how.** Often it is written in the first and second person (i.e.,**I and you)**. Columns have headings, or titles, and the writer is identified with a by-

line. If you are choosing the heading, focus on 4-H and include your title and address. Now, before you begin, you should decide:

- ❑ Why are you writing it? Do you want to inform, entertain or educate?
- ❑ Who is it for**...**those involved or not involved in 4-H? Adults or kids?
- ❑ What do you want to discuss? Make sure it belongs in a column and is not really a news story.
- ❑ How do you want to present your column? You might include coming events or a question and answer format.

Following are some tips for writing columns:

- ❑ Be timely and complement non 4-H news stories. For example, if there has been significant news coverage or a series on local bicycle accidents, you might feature the 4-H Bike Safety program.
- ❑ Use local names and locations. Quotes and references help others "speak" for you. People like to read about their acquaintances and familiar places.
- ❑ Vary topics as much as possible. Don't overwrite a subject with too much detail or technical language. Use the experiences of local leaders or members to tell the story or facts.
- ❑ Establish a style and structure and try not to vary it. If upcoming events are noted at the end, that's where readers will usually look for them.

Finally, follow the rules of good journalism. Meet deadlines on time, or better yet, early. Cooperate with your editor in every way. Remember, you need him more than he needs you!

If you are trying to establish a column, bring several sample installments to an editor and talk it over. All he can say is no. A column can be a big help in your public relations effort. People **do** read columns.

Radio and Television

Almost all radio and television stations reserve a considerable amount of time for public service announcements, called PSA's. Take advantage of this opportunity! This can be a very effective way of getting your 4-H message or special 4-H program to a large viewing or listening audience.

Many radio and TV stations are community minded with a commitment to do a specific amount of public service time. But remember, you will be competing for air and viewing time with countless other organizations who believe just as deeply in their group as you do in 4-H. So you must gain the edge with timely, relevant topics.

Learn about radio and TV in your area. Spend time listening to each station and viewing your local cable TV channel to assess their format and what their focus is. It will help you determine which station or cable channel you may want to approach first.

LET'S TALK RADIO. . .

You will probably get better cooperation from local radio stations than large city network operations. But don't discount the metropolitan station, especially if it is strong in your county.

Know the kind of programs they offer and where you can

fit in. 4-H will probably have a better chance with one of the following formats:

Talk Show- This could be an interview, discussion panel or call-in. The guest might be a volunteer leader, 4-H club member, staff member or you.

News- Capitalize on large countywide 4-H programs or events such as the county fair, camp, public speaking or other innovative, unusual programs.

Spot Announcements- (PSA's...remember?) These 10, 20 or 30 second spots get great mileage when they are heard throughout the day. You can tape them in your office if you have a good quality tape machine, or at the radio station. They could also be read by an announcer or a 4-H boy or girl.

Writing for radio is a very personal medium which reaches only the ear.Therefore, you should write informally, in an inviting, casual and conversational manner. **In other words, write the way you speak.**

Spot announcements are in some ways like commercials. Be sure they have a good opening jolt to get the listener's attention and a unique selling proposition powerful enough to make people change to your product, which in this case is 4-H.

Here are some *mechanics* of radio copy:

- ❑ On radio, 25 words =10 seconds. But time yourself!
- ❑ Use one side of 8 1/2"x11" white paper. If you think it might rattle, use index cards.
- ❑ Type all copy, triple-spaced, with large margins. Never all caps! Start one-third down the page.
- ❑ At the top put 4-H, your name, address and phone number, both office and home.
- ❑ Be sure to tell the **who,what, where, when,** and **why** of an event.
- ❑ Spell difficult names phonetically.
- ❑ If a person is to interviewed by an announcer, submit a biography and a few key points to be covered.

NOW, LET'S LOOK AT TELEVISION. . .

Television provides yet another excellent media exposure to get your 4-H message to large audiences.

It also offers youth and volunteers an opportunity to gain self confidence.

When a 4-H'er performs in front of a TV camera, it can be a most exhilarating experience, whether it's live or taped.

As noted earlier, it is much easier to become involved with a local TV or radio station than large network channels. They are more readily available and cater to a smaller, more specialized audience by offering both programming and educational choices.

- ❑ Determine the kind of programs local TV stations air. Also, does the cable company prefer live or taped programs? Most programs viewed today are taped.
- ❑ Television's success as a teaching tool offers wonderful opportunities for 4-H exposure and promotion. Because of TV's unique combination of sight, sound and motion, it not only creates awareness, but also influences attitudes, thinking and opinions.

So where do you begin? Since TV production demands much thought and requires professional planning and attention to detail, we suggest you make an appointment to visit the studio and talk with the program manager, director or producer. Find out about studio capabilities, facilities, and what will or will not work.The staff will welcome 4-H if you can offer a new twist or fresh approach.

Many people will be involved in getting your 4-H show on the screen. This may include a producer-director, floor manager or perhaps a host-interviewer.They'll offer you guidelines and answer your many questions.The microphones, cameras, visual aides and other facilities are best handled by the TV crew. Have them check out your own props and visuals for appropriateness.

These TV experts will select just what you need to insure a strong presentation and eliminate a lot of technical confusion! In fact, a demonstration given by a young 4-H boy or girl usually peaks the interest of a host-interviewer. They're primarily interested in a clever, catchy presentation.

Personal Appearance
Since this is television, a bit of vanity must be part of the "big picture".You're sure to be asked, **How do I look?**

Generally, whatever feels natural and comfortable is pretty safe. Be well groomed and neat. For women, it's best to avoid excess jewelry and heavy makeup. Men should avoid black or plaid suits. Also, pastel shirts are better than white. There's a whole laundry list of do's and don'ts and just as many resources available to guide you in the best colors to wear, makeup tips and clothing suggestions**...**So how come these suggestions almost never seem to apply to kids? They ***always*** look great!!

Of prime importance, wear what you believe puts your best self forward and even boosts your confidence a bit! And do keep in mind the effects of **non-verbal communication,** such as facial expressions, demeanor and body language. This holds true for everyone in front of the cameras - volunteers, 4-H'ers, staff and you!

Seize the Opportunity!
Being on TV is such an exciting opportunity for boys and girls to experience. Sure, they'll be nervous, but that's 0K. It's **healthy anxiety!**

This becomes yet one more personal development accomplishment they can be proud of and we all know that in 4-H, it's kids that count!

If your 4-H'ers are not already involved in TV, take the plunge. Boys and girls can demonstrate their winning county presentation and sewing project members can perform a mini fashion show narrated by teen 4-H ambassadors. Animal science members have their pets,and they make great visuals!

Delegates to the Citizenship Washington Focus Youth Conference, National 4-H Youth Congress and National 4-H Conference could share their experiences and thoughts about these once-in-a-lifetime award trips! What better way to have the public understand 4-H!

Don't overlook some excellent publications that further explain media presentations. One that has always been a bellwether for Extension is the *Agricultural Communications in Education Handbook. This is available from Interstate Printers and Publications,, Inc. Danville, Illinois 61832-0594.*

About Web Sites

Is there a 4-H Web site up and running from your county office? Or are you a contributor to a regional or statewide 4-H Web page at your land grant college or university?

- ❑ If so, who writes the copy and updates the contents?
- ❑ Also, who handles the Web design and graphics?
- ❑ Does it contain general 4-H information or highlight specific county, regional or state 4-H programs, events and other happenings?
- ❑ Who is the intended audience**...**the general public or the **extended** 4-H family?
- ❑ Is the Web site used primarily to inform the general public or as a recruiting tool for both new members and leaders?

As you can see, all Web pages are not created for just one purpose. Once you've decided on your focus and your audience, then you've taken the first big step to help you zero in on **what** you want to say, to **whom** and **why**.

Some of you reading this are already well on your way to becoming Web site pros**...**or at **least** you are quite familiar with both the concept and the process involved in creating Web sites. Yet others are not!

After cruising the World Wide Web (WWW), you may decide that building or creating your own 4-H Web page is a complicated task, best left to designers who have spent months or even years on this sort of thing.

Not so! Sure, in **some** cases you may be right. But don't be dismayed. There are Web programs around to lead you right through the process!

WHY TACKLE WEB SITES?

Before we delve into the many ways to get help and to learn how to design a Web site, let's first talk about its value to 4-H. **And specifically its value in terms of good public relations.**

Building a Web site for promoting 4-H and disseminating 4-H news or information offers yet one more avenue for good communication and public relations. It's another way to let others know what 4-H and youth are doing. Promote your 4-H'ers, your volunteers and your new and innovative programs. Brag a little! Your 4-H'ers will feel proud to see **their very own** Web site published!

SEEKING HELP

If getting started seems a bit tricky, there's more help around than you ever imagined. Why not begin by looking in your own backyard? It's a great way to involve talented others such as**:**

- ❑ Computer savvy 4-H leaders and other volunteers
- ❑ A 4-H parent who owns one of a number of Web programs available may help you design a Web page .
- ❑ A talented 4-H member who is known to have created some Web pages may just be waiting to be asked!
- ❑ These 4-H'ers or adult volunteers might offer great suggestions for typesetting, graphics, photos or even some relevant copy.

If you want to learn how to build a Web site for 4-H, you can find a number of programs that almost turn your ideas into a semi-automatic endeavor.

For Windows, suggested Web programs are:

- ❑ Dot Cool Builder 2.0
- ❑ Trellix Web
- ❑ Web Studio
- ❑ Adobe GoLive
- ❑ Microsoft Frontpage

Mac compatible Web programs include**:**

- ❑ Adobe GoLive
- ❑ Claris Home Page

There are a number of other Web programs available, too. Some are free and the ones with a fee are usually quite affordable. Other sources for help and information include your local library, bookstores and local experts.

GETTING STARTED

It's relatively simple. Picture a **newsletter, brochure or flyer.** (You will read about these in the next chapter.) All three are composed of a **title, graphics** and **text.** So are Web pages! But first you need to figure out what you will write, including the topic, focus and audience. As noted earlier, do you want to inform, educate or promote?

Just as with the **Web site programs** noted previously, many **graphic programs** exist which include photos, logos, pictures and even cartoons for your Web page.

GETTING PUBLISHED

There are lots of options to help you accomplish this. Getting a Web site published is so important, because once your site is up and running, it will serve no purpose unless it draws visitors.

Many internet online services offer free space for posting your Web page. It's time consuming and a bit technical, but definitely doable. Basically, you need to transfer your Web page to a server operated by an Internet service provider (ISP). The ISP must agree, of course, to provide room for your Web site. In fact, there are some Web programs that will help you transfer it there. Some are free and others charge a fee.

Perhaps your land grant college or university hosts an Extension or 4-H Web site that you can transfer to them through your county or office server.

At this point, you probably have many more questions than answers about creating a 4-H Web page! We hope not. But remember, a published and well promoted Web page can result in tons of great exposure for 4-H. **So good luck if this is your first attempt, and be sure to seek help. It's there for the asking!**

CHAPTER VI

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS

How to Write Clearly

Writing! We all do it, whether we like it or not.You write news releases, newsletters, brochures, fact sheets and sometimes even project materials. As youth workers, you rely heavily on written communication to reach your many audiences.

Are you getting your message across both clearly and simply? Are you writing at your readers' comprehension level? One of the first questions to ask yourself is: Who am I writing for? Are my readers adults or children? Do they already know about 4-H or are they a potential new audience?

A ***readability formula*** can easily answer many of these questions.There are a number of readability formulas devised to rate writing on a scale ranging from **very easy to read** to **very difficult to read.** One of these formulas is called the Gunning Fog Index.

It reduces everything to a number that approximates the grade level at which a person must read to comprehend the material. For example, writing with a Fog Index of 10 is aimed at those who read at or above the 10th grade level.

To determine the Fog Index, take a 100 word sample of something you've written and apply these steps:

- ❑ Find the average number of words per sentence in a sample. If the final sentence in the sample runs beyond the 100th word, use more than 100 words to compute the average for this step.
- ❑ Count the number of words in this 100 word sample containing three or more syllables. Do not count proper nouns or three syllable verb forms ending in-ed or-es.
- ❑ Add the average number of words per sentence to the number of words containing three or more syllables and multiply the sum by 0.4. This will give you the readability grade level.

For example: A 100-word passage contains an average of 20 words per sentence and 10 words of three or more syllables. The sum of these two factors is 30 (20 + 10). Multiplying 30 x 0.4 gives a Fog Index of 12. Readers of this material would have to be able to read and comprehend material on the 12th grade level.

Gunning also equates the Fog Index to the reading complexity of various popular magazines. To provide a perspective, he points out the reading level of sample publications, such as:

Atlantic Monthly	12
Time and **Newsweek**	11
Reader's Digest	10
Sports Illustrated	9
Good Housekeeping	8
People	7
comics	6

In applying this formula, note that **the average American reads at the 9th grade level.** However, many read below that level. In fact, most readers feel more comfortable reading at one or two levels **below** their maximum.

This index has been applied to the writing in many business as well as Extension publications and quite often, the level is too high for the audience. How, for example, does a 4-H leader expect to communicate with 9-12 year old club members when the members' project books are written at the 12th grade level?

The above explanation of the Gunning Fog Index was excerpted from School Communications...Ideas that Work by Don Bagin, Frank Grazian and George Harrison, published by McGraw Hill.

For further information on the Fog Index, as well as excellent advice on how to improve your writing, we recommend reading The Technique of Clear Writing by Robert Gunning, published by McGraw Hill.

Remember to use familiar words and concrete terms, but avoid educational jargon.This will automatically help reduce your number of words in particularly long sentences.

Here's another suggestion: Try to keep 70% of your words to five letters or fewer when writing for the public. If you do, you'll be on par with Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

One last important thought: Get to the point immediately **(unless you're writing that best-selling novel!)**. Long introductions bore readers. Research shows that readers will stay with you for a 500-word message if you can interest them beyond the first 50 words. Currently, most readers stop before reading 50 words--unless they identify the subject with their own interest.

The next step toward improving your writing skills is to realize that writing is a craft that can be learned. When writing, strive to:

- ❑ Express your views simply.
- ❑ Stress specifics rather than generalities.
- ❑ Edit your writing to clear out unnecessary words.

ELEVEN PRINCIPLES OF CLEAR WRITING

The following list of suggestions are taken from the book School Communications...Ideas That Work, noted on the previous page.

Keep Sentences Short. For easy reading, sentences should vary in structure and length but on the average, should be short.

Choose the Simple over the Complex. Many complex terms are unnecessary. When there is a simpler way of saying something, use it.

Develop Your Vocabulary. Don't let preference for short words limit your vocabulary. Intelligence and vocabulary size are closely linked; you need long words to think with.

Avoid Unneeded Words. Nothing weakens writing so much as extra words. Be critical of your own writing and make every word carry its own weight.

Put Action into Your Verbs. The heaviness of much business writing results from overworking the passive verb. Use the active voice.

Use Terms Your Reader Can Picture. Abstract terms make writing dull and foggy. Choose short, concrete words that the reader can visualize.

Tie In With Your Readers' Experience. The reader will not get your new idea unless you link it with some old idea they already have.

Write the Way You Talk. Well, anyway, as much that way as you can! A conversational tone is one of the best avenues to good writing. Avoid stuffy business jargon. In letters, use **we** and **you** frequently. People identify with **people**, not with an abstraction like **it is felt.**

Make Full Use of Variety. Use as many different arrangements of words and sentences as you can think up, but be sure your meaning is clear

Write to Express, not to Impress. Present your ideas simply and directly. The writer who makes the best impression is the one who can express complete ideas simply. "Big men use little words; little men use big words."

Revise and Rewrite. Cut needless words, sentences and paragraphs. Improvement is always possible. Edit. Edit.

Newsletters that Communicate

Press releases and letters require good, clear writing. And you've just picked up some ideas on how to sharpen your writing skills.These same rules apply to newsletters, but you'll need to draw upon your creativity and good visual effects to increase newsletter readership.

So take a long, hard look at your newsletter. Now picture it competing with the sophisticated colorful direct advertising mail your 4-H audience receives daily. Don't despair! You can make your direct mail match the competition. Just follow these three simple rules**:**

- **Your message and the audience:** You have the advantage.Your newsletter tells your readers something they need to know - times and dates of events, project and program information, etc. This helps insure that they will read and understand your message.
- **Keep it short and simple (KISS!):** Use clear, short words and simple sentences. Remember, the average person in our country reads at the 9th grade level. Keep your mind on the reader. Would a ten year old want to read your 4-H member letter?
- **Looks count:** Invite the reader into the copy. Unless the page looks attractive and easy to read, the reader may never start.

Four easy ways to make a newsletter more inviting are:

1. Break up copy. Gray pages which are solid blocks of words with no breaks rarely get read. Leave open space between articles. Put borders around items of special interest. Bullets, bars or boxes and other copy-breaking devices highlight lists. Subheads also make reading easier.

2. Illustrate. Clip art, both pen and ink drawings and computer graphics, are the next best thing to photos. Remember, photos need to be of top quality to be scanned into a newsletter. There are many excellent and inexpensive sources of clip art in computer software programs as well as commercial clip art books.

3. Balance. Locate items for emphasis. Put the most important news first or at the top of the page.

4. Equipment. Get to know and understand what your computer and other office equipment can do. Get involved! Don't leave it all to your secretary.

Brochures and Flyers

Many, if not most of the tips and guidelines that are listed in **Newsletters that Communicate** also apply to creating attractive and eye-catching brochures and flyers.

These promotional materials tell the reader something about 4-H and create **awareness**. But they rarely sell the program. Nevertheless, they are still a very important part of 4-H public relations.

In general, brochures and flyers should:

- ❑ Contain very little text.
- ❑ Leave sufficient white space to create an attractive look and eliminate clutter.
- ❑ Capture the reader's attention with your choice of layout and use of graphics.
- ❑ Direct your text to a target audience such as schools, parents or the general public.
- ❑ Gear your writing level to the specific audience: adults, kindergarten through 2nd graders or 4th graders and above.

So you see, as time goes by, you may want three or more different types of handouts to meet the needs of your various 4-H audiences.

Public Speaking - Organize a Speakers' Bureau

As a 4-H agent, you undoubtedly are asked to speak to civic and service groups. So take a good look at your speaking skills. They may be just fine or perhaps need a little polishing. Reread your 4-H public speaking guide to run a quick check on yourself. It's also a good idea to have someone else critique you. You might be surprised by what you hear, but it can be so helpful!

There's no more effective way of communicating than

face to face. But that's not always possible.There's such a large audience to serve and only one of you. Look around at the many people who can also tell the 4-H story. Many talented adults and teens would enjoy this experience.

The solution might be to **develop a speakers' bureau.** Old hat, you say? The concept of a speakers' bureau isn't new to many of you.`You may have provided a speaker for a group, or sponsored a teen ambassador program. Planning and coordinating a well organized speakers' bureau can reap maximum dividends for minimum time invested.

Seven Easy Steps For Organizing and Maintaining a Speakers' Bureau:

1. Locate Speakers - Good candidates include teen 4-H'ers who have done an excellent job in public speaking and leaders who have taught subject matter workshops. Also consider adult volunteers who have held association leadership positions or alumnae who are dynamic public speakers. They are all good candidates and just require minimal training. You might write to these potential speakers, but it will be more effective if you contact them personally.

2. Provide Training - Help your speakers prepare. Their presentation and knowledge of 4-H are equally important. Speakers presenting subject matter must also be able to give a brief 4-H overview. It's your job to provide them with basic facts, figures and brochures about joining 4-H. Wrong information confuses audiences.

3. Topics - Any topic from dog care to photography is good as long as it relates to 4-H activities. Also, the program chair may request a specific 4-H subject, and that's fine. Remember, offering a variety of topics will usually result in more repeat calls rather than always offering a general 4-H slide presentation. But this doesn't mean you should avoid showing slides or videos. They must be short,10 to 15 minutes maximum, interesting and timely.

4. Speakers' Bureau Flyer - Describe your speakers' bureau and topics available. Mail this flyer to civic and service groups. As a special service, you can offer a packaged "ace-in-the-hole" program which they can borrow if their scheduled speaker cancels at the last minute. Program chairs really appreciate this.

5. News Release - Remember to send a brief news release with a copy of your flyer to all local newspapers. It can't hurt to follow up in a few days with a phone call or personal contact.You be the judge of that**...**you know your local news people! Most papers offer community service columns and will cooperate by printing your announcement.

6. Coordinating the Bureau - Once your speakers' bureau is underway, it should only take about a half hour each week to keep it well oiled. All engagements should be cleared through one chairperson.The ideal is to find an enthusiastic adult to coordinate speakers, transportation and engagements. They handle the details so that all runs smoothly.

7. Updating - Update your speaker list annually. Do the same with your flyer so that it has a fresh look each year. Remember, program chairs do change. Also, evaluate the effectiveness of your speakers' bureau. Note changes that may be needed - both in content and delivery. Is a speakers' bureau worth it? Yes! It tells the

4-H story to new audiences. It establishes great rapport with community groups who may help sponsor events or awards and creates superb 4-H awareness. It also provides leadership and public speaking opportunities for 4-H teens and adult volunteers.

CHAPTER VII

VISUALS TELL THE STORY

Photos, slides, videos and exhibits all play a big part in telling your 4-H story. We're not promising to make you a marketing whiz. We just wish to offer some basic ideas to help get your message across in the most effective way possible.

Photography

Photos are a powerful way to help people get a picture of your message. The age-old saying that **a photo is worth 1,000 words** stands backed by research that has proven photos receive 50% of all readership! So it behooves you to use them often and to make sure they are of the best possible quality.

Good photographs attract a reader's attention.They are especially important for the "30 second reader" who spends a mere half minute glancing over a newspaper, newsletter or yearbook. At the very least, a good photo is the bait that draws the reader into the text or makes them aware of a program, event or personal happening. Let's also not forget the importance of quality photos for exhibits and brochures. The burning question remains, how to obtain those great photos?

In the best of worlds, you would always have an expert photographer on hand to take those very important pictures! But we live in the **real** world. Because pictures are invaluable for telling the 4-H story to the public, you must be able to snap quality photos when no professional photographer is available.

- **Select a Good Camera.**Your first step in achieving quality photos is selecting a camera that meets your needs. If it's lightweight and easy to use, you'll be more inclined to carry it with you. If used properly, a point-and-shoot 35mm or digital camera can produce fine quality, newsworthy photos.
- **Selecting a 35mm Camera.** In most cases, a 35mm auto-focus camera with a zoom lens will fill the bill. If you can afford to purchase an additional, more powerful lens, it might be worth the cost. As time goes by, and you become even more adept at picture taking, you may want to invest in one. They just snap-on to the camera and will provide you with more flexibility in the type of pictures you can take. But if you have a good 35mm auto-focus zoom camera, you can still do a great job...even without an additional lens.
- **Consider a Digital Camera.** Digital cameras open the door to many new and innovative photographic management techniques. Picture quality will vary depending upon price.The output may be as good as or of lower quality than 35mm cameras. Most newspapers accept both digital and 35mm photos.You can also create computer generated and enhanced photos. Using commercial computer programs, you can crop, brighten colors, reduce shadows and make collages. Another good source for information on digital cameras is the Internet. If you're considering purchasing one, you may want to check with local newspapers to see what file format and resolution they prefer.
- **Ask Lots of Questions.** Be sure to investigate the smorgasbord of camera equipment available before you buy. And look in person, never purchase before you have held the camera in your hand. Check out all the features, and compare several kinds before making your selection.

- **Now that You Own the Camera,** learn about it and make it your friend! Practice with it indoors and outdoors until you feel comfortable under all conditions. Know settings, the best film type for your needs and lighting requirements. There are a number of easy to read and understand books available... and above all, read the user manual!
- **Developing and Printing Your Film.** Today, newspapers accept color film and that's great because of the speed in getting film developed into prints...from one hour to overnight! The cost is relatively low. It's more expensive and usually takes longer to have black and white film processed.

Do Your Own Developing and Printing?

If you have the equipment, know-how and desire to do your own developing and printing, go for it! You can learn to custom process your photos and even "fix" many of your mistakes. But this takes a good deal of time and some money, both of which you might not have.

The equipment (enlarger, chemicals and paper) is somewhat expensive. You'll also need a dark room equipped with a sink. A bathroom will work especially well if it doesn't have a window and has some counter space. If your office happens to have most of the developing and printing equipment - give it a shot!

The satisfaction and pleasure you'll receive from printing your own photos is hard to describe and could even develop into a life-long hobby.

The following lists some tips and reminders for taking good pictures:

- **People+Action = successful photos.** Be inconspicuous and shoot often and quickly because candid shots can be great, but by far they are more difficult to take.
- **Avoid obviously posed pictures.** Although you may need to practice, posed photos that don't look that way often result in more interesting and creative pictures.
- **Stay away from "grip 'n grin" stiff photos.** Two people shaking hands or a child holding a trophy often present lifeless, cliche photos that may be rejected by many larger newspapers.
- **Ask a pro.** They usually appreciate being asked and can tell you which of your photos are good and how others can be improved. Pay attention! This advice can be invaluable.
- **Get up close.** Aim your camera, then take one more step forward, focus and SHOOT! A primary rule to follow for photos for print is that pictures should contain faces larger than a thumbnail to be usable.
- **Don't Pack 'em In.** Two or three people in front of an uncluttered background usually produces good results. If all 18 boys and girls in the club want to squeeze into the picture, take two photos. Snap one for the newspaper with just a few members of the club, and another with "everyone" and present it to the club for their scrapbook. Then everybody's happy!
- **One Last Thought.** Remember that a ***good*** photo with a caption will usually reach more people than a news article alone. And many more papers will opt to use it.

Learn the kind of photos your local newspapers require or desire. Always comply with their request. They're just following orders. If you take photos which meet their standards, you can help promote 4-H, yet not always have to depend on their busy staff photographers.

Feel free to suggest shots to the staff photographer, especially ones relevant to the story.They often appreciate this help. But don't be disappointed if your suggestion is ignored. They do have the final decision!

There are also many other uses for your photos.

- ❑ Take photos at your livestock auction. A buyer would appreciate having a picture of the purchased animal with the 4-H member who raised it.
- ❑ Or send the county commissioner an extra photo showing he or she pinning the grand champion rosette on a club's winning county fair exhibit.
- ❑ Also, the 4-H'er captured on film executing that magnificent jump at a horse show would love to have a copy to show family and friends.

Learn the mechanics of handling photographs correctly. Never:

- ❑ Cut photos to size
- ❑ Paste photos to anything (check first, but in most cases, rubber cement is 0K)
- ❑ Paper clip a photo to anything
- ❑ Write on the front or back of a photo

One more tip:
For your own use, set up a file system of photos. Be sure to date and identify them. Having a file of photos can save the day when preparing an exhibit, brochure, flyer or annual report. Develop a system that suits you...file either by **subject matter** or **events.** Make sure your secretary understands your system.

A word about Slides

Putting together a slide set can be a rewarding, satisfying accomplishment and a great benefit to your program.

A slide tape consists of your selected slides arranged in a tray along with a script. Slide tapes can be used in many ways and with just about any type of audience.
You can even add appropriate background music to your script. If possible, have a tape with silent clues, butaudible beeps are also OK. Then you merely turn the machine on, and it's ready to go!

Use the same camera that you take photos with, but you'll need slide film. What type? There are different film speeds.Your selection will depend upon whether your slides will be taken inside or out, and will they be still or action shots?

Are there any advantages to using slides without a taped script? Sure!

- ❑ If the viewers don't understand a certain point or want to revisit a slide or two, you can replay those slides.You can narrate verbally or prepare your own written script. We recommend a non-scripted presentation under most circumstances. Just know your subject so well that you can narrate as you show the slides.
- ❑ When teaching a skill from slides, you may need to repeat certain slides to emphasize a point.
- ❑ You can easily tailor your talk to different audiences while using the same slides. It's probably easier to alter your presentation than to prepare two or three appropriate slide sets.
- ❑ With written or taped scripts, it's more practical for you to change some slides to meet special needs or audiences.

Some tips on creating your slide presentation:

- ❑ Know your purpose and your audience.
- ❑ Outline your message.
- ❑ Make a list of the type of slides you will need.
- ❑ Now you're ready for production. Write the script and shoot your own slides or collect appropriate ones that you may already have on hand.
- ❑ Keep it short. A 15-minute show usually has about 80 slides. That's long enough!!
- ❑ Audiences will **hea**r taped scripts. So keep your wording simple and avoid long sentences.
- ❑ Coordinate both your script and slides. After assembled, make sure everything fits together in good sequence. If it needs editing, make changes to either the script or the slides...whichever works best for you!
- ❑ Does it tell the story? Does the script need **further** editing?
- ❑ Last, keep your slides current. Review and update about every two or three three years.

Videos

Generally, a good video attracts and holds the audience's attention. You may already own a palm- corder. Or perhaps your Extension office has one. The newer ones are lightweight and very simple to operate. Check your instruction manual for the nuts and bolts directions for operating your video equipment. You can also consult with colleagues who may be more experienced in the field of video.

There are several advantages to videotaping:

- ❑ Attracts and holds viewers' attention, especially if they're on the video!
- ❑ You can edit out goofs.
- ❑ Tapes can be used again and again.
- ❑ You can tape close-ups of small objects so they show up better.
- ❑ Tape is immediate...it can be played back as soon as it's made.
- ❑ Easily transported and distributed.
- ❑ Easy to use.

Now let's check out some disadvantages:

- ❑ Provides no response from audience (you cannot alter the tape delivery or performance unless you first edit it).
- ❑ Taping takes time and equipment, which can be expensive.
- ❑ You are competing with slick, paid professional presentations.
- ❑ Video tape viewers are a sophisticated bunch!

Perhaps the best means of weighing the pros and cons of videotaping is to determine how you might use it. And since video is a very flexible medium, it can be useful in many ways:

- ❑ Record real 4-H events, activities or programs to later study and make improvements or just to entertain.
- ❑ Record 4-H workshops or training to be played back at 4-H club meetings by leaders or members who couldn't attend the "live" workshop.
- ❑ Videos are a great way to record accomplishments. For example, environmental conditions can be recorded before, during and after a 4-H club has completed their community service clean-up task.
- ❑ Use video to teach skills, demonstrate public speaking, show varying stages of a project along with the final results.

These are just a few ways you can use video tapes. The list is almost endless. And then there's the whole field of video camera language as well as the art of writing scripts for video, which are a bit trickier. But with some imagination, study, consulting with the pros and with lots of practice, you can make video taping work for you!

Exhibits that Tell and Sell

An exhibit must grab the viewer's attention and hold it! Planning is the first stage in creating an exhibit. All good exhibits have the following in common:

- ❑ Attract attention.
- ❑ Illustrate a message so clearly that viewers will understand it at a glance.
- ❑ Summarize a single idea.
- ❑ Tell an interested viewer where to get more information.

Here are some key points to consider before you begin:

- ❑ What do I want to say?...**your theme or main idea.**
- ❑ Who is my audience? What is important to them? Are they youth or adults?
- ❑ Is adequate space available for our exhibit?
- ❑ Do we need electrical outlets?
- ❑ Exhibit locations include schools, public buildings, shopping centers, malls, county fairs, local expos and festival sites.
- ❑ How portable must the exhibit be?

Do's and Don'ts of Design

- ❑ Do set up your exhibit to read from left to right - like the page of a book.
- ❑ Do use horizontal lettering, not vertical.
- ❑ Be sure people can see your exhibit and that background material isn't distracting.
- ❑ Do make illustrations big and bold and lettering large and easy to read. Follow this guide:

Lettering	Viewing Distance
1/4 inch	8 feet
1/2 inch	16 feet
1 inch	32 feet
2 inches	64 feet

- ❑ Do use real objects or models to add life to your exhibit.
- ❑ Don't try to say too much. Remember, the viewer should be able to digest your message in just a few **seconds. (If you want to say more, do it with hand-out brochures, but don't try to say it all within your exhibit.)**
- ❑ Do sketch your ideas and layout before you begin. This will give you a rough idea of size, materials and general design.
- ❑ Do read about suggestions for artwork and lettering.
- ❑ Do anticipate trouble. Will the lettering run or bleed if it rains? Will wind blow the panels down? Will paper or poster board charts and posters get limp and curl in humid conditions?
- ❑ Do play it safe. Make sure there are no cords or electrical wires to trip over. Anchor all panels to keep them from tipping.

Your exhibit can be simple or elaborate. Follow the tips given and plan carefully and you should get your message across to a large audience.

Michigan State University's publication, *Communication Made Easy: A 4-H Guide to Presenting Information, 4-H 1065A.* This publication is a great source for learning how to plan, build and use exhibits.

CHAPTER VIII

QUALITY IN EVERY EVENT

Plan, Prepare and Produce

As an Extension 4-H educator, you know how critical it is to plan effective programs. Good public relations planning can be as important as the program itself. So whether you're responsible for a volunteer leader workshop, local staff training or a statewide subject matter in-service, it's important to always ask...**What do I want to happen as a result of this workshop?**

All events should be designed around the three P's**: PLANNING, PREPARATION** and **PRODUCTION. Plan** for maximum participant involvement. **Prepare** for discussion materials and facilitators. **Produce** all needed communications, final reports and an evaluation.

Like all good educators, you seek the best ways to share knowledge with your many audiences. And one way is through workshops and meetings. More and more 4-H administrators, specialists and county staff are committing time, money and effort offering programs on key topics.

How would you rate the results of your efforts? Are the programs you plan or attend effective? Do they encourage the kind of change and motivation you hope for? All this effort demands precious time from your

already crowded schedule. Can you afford to be associated with a mediocre effort? Of course not!

There **are** ways to avoid this trauma and to hold effective events, using both good program and public relations planning. You ***can*** enjoy guaranteed success. Here are some tips that have worked for others**:**

- ❑ **Tie the Topic to a Current Need.** Involve program participants in topic selections. Your 4-H leaders or colleagues (whichever the case may be) should help with the planning process. If the program is imposed, there is usually less acceptance. Surveying members or gaining input from a planning committee are two effective ways to find out what people think they want.
- ❑ **Select the Date Carefully.** Dates that conflict with holidays or activities will wreck even the best program.
- ❑ **Publicize the Event.** When writing your letter announcing the workshop, keep your reader in mind. This is their first impression, so make it a good one! Will this announcement answer the question "What's in it for me?" Also, write one or two press releases. If possible, prepare some radio PSA's. Plan for signs, directions and welcoming information to accommodate your audience.
- ❑ **Get a Good Speaker.**This is so important. No matter how well you plan all aspects of your program, if your speaker is boring or off-target, the whole program will reflect this mood. One way to avoid this pitfall is to first hear the speaker. If that isn't possible, perhaps you can check with someone who has—but you must have faith in this person's judgment. Make sure the speaker knows exactly what you hope to accomplish and the time available to do this.

- ❑ **Check with the speaker about the following:**
  - Type of microphone desired
  - Need for audio-visual equipment
  - Special audience seating preference
  - Will there be handouts?
  - **Put everything in writing. You'll feel more comfortable!**
- ❑ **Select a meeting room that works.** If you have a choice of rooms, great. Select the most appropriate one. If you don't have a choice, do what you can to get the most from what's available. Check the temperature, lighting, location of electrical outlets and rest rooms. Find out who is in charge in case something goes awry.
- ❑ **Have contingency plans.** If the speaker is late or doesn't show, plan for a stand-in speaker, a video or a film. When a program activity falls through at the last minute, one effective "fill-in" is to pick a topic for participants to brainstorm. Divide into small groups and appoint someone to record and distribute the ideas to the group.
- ❑ **Evaluate the program.** An evaluation will tell you what the audience liked or disliked about the program. The results should let you know if you're on target. Read and implement these good suggestions for next time. Be sure to keep the evaluation simple.

One last reminder: Keep **good notes.** Include all plans, commitments and deadlines in your notes. And share them with someone. If an emergency arises and you're unable to carry on, you'll know the **program** will. It's a great way to become more organized and you will have terrific notes for next time. Good luck and have winning programs!

CHAPTER IX

EVALUATION: DOES IT REALLY WORK?

Although we touched on the importance of evaluation throughout this book, we believe it's of major importance and therefore chose evaluation as the focus of this last chapter.

Why Evaluate?

From a public relations standpoint, you evaluate programs and events because they are the cornerstones of your product. To keep the 4-H product the best it can be, you must know what your customers like or dislike about it.

And In today's world, because funding is frequently based upon results, evaluations of educational programs should also show impact. Therefore, wherever appropriate and feasible, build into your evaluations a measurement of what was learned and how you will use it.

Finally, gaining ongoing feedback about how we serve our customers (post sales service) is of tantamount importance because it is a factor that heavily affects leader retention. Always remember that good service will keep leaders because they feel valued.

Gathering Feedback

Evaluation is probably one of the most overlooked, yet significant parts of 4-H program planning. At this point you are probably quite familiar with the four steps involved in developing 4-H programs, events and workshops**: analyzing, planning, communicating** and **evaluating**.

- ❑ **First we analyze:** Who is our audience? What are their needs? What do we want to accomplish?
- ❑ **Next, we plan:** This is determined by the goals you've set, your clientele and many other factors.
- ❑ **Finally, we communicate:** This, of course, is the "doing" part of your program. Far too many of us are guilty of ending this process too soon.

Without some form of meaningful evaluation, how will you ever know if your efforts are having the desired effect? Evaluation needs to be an integral part of this process. It can provide valuable information on the effectiveness of each of the steps used in the planning of your programs.

Without program evaluation, you could be left with too many unanswered questions:

- ❑ Have you met the demonstrated need that prompted you to offer this program?
- ❑ Did the program motivate, educate or change anyone's attitude?
- ❑ Were the most appropriate techniques and methods used?

Evaluation isn't a one-size-fits-all process and we should be wary of a tendency to follow a "cookbook approach." There are specific principles of program evaluation to consider and techniques that can be adapted to particular program situations.

Be sure to make use of the many resources at hand to learn about practical and effective evaluation and accountability techniques. They're both readily available and easily adaptable to your needs.

This may not be on par with conducting a scientific research project where you must prove the reliability of your findings, but you should have somewhat valid results for your extra effort!

Building effective evaluation techniques into all phases of your 4-H program will result in more relevant, useful programs for your clientele. This can be done in a variety of ways. It needn't be complicated, expensive or time consuming.

Here are some recommendations for getting started with forms:

- ❑ **Hand out evaluation cards** at 4-H educational meetings, events and workshops to be collected at the close of the session.
- ❑ **Conduct a telephone public opinion survey** using a stratified random sampling. That simply means selecting as an example, every third name on your leader list. A committee of 4-H volunteers may enjoy making the telephone calls. Just be sure to provide them with a very brief prepared script so that everyone is basically saying the same thing!
- ❑ **Use tallies of requests for materials or publications** as a means of gauging interest and success.

Measuring Customer Service

Gathering feedback on how leaders and 4-H families perceive they are being serviced by you and your staff is sometimes just a bit more sensitive than program evaluation.

Disclosing that someone at the office was rude on the telephone is usually more awkward for a leader to divulge than stating that the program didn't meet his or her needs.

The following are a few questions appropriate for this type of anonymous reply survey:

- Are your requests met in a timely fashion?
- Are your suggestions dealt with courteously?
- Are the phones answered graciously?
- How can the newsletter be more useful to you?

Whatever method you use (**and there are many good assessment techniques)** to evaluate the effectiveness of your 4-H programs, you need to keep in mind the people who care enough to provide the responses you receive. Effective communication is two-way and your respondents deserve receiving a brief summary of the results in which they helped to provide needed input.

No time or money to prepare yet another mailing? Just include a return mailer in your next newsletter! Remember, an informed audience is a responsive and supportive audience.

Measuring Impact

Obtaining feedback needs to be an integral part of your 4-H program planning effort. Another key technique for obtaining feedback is opinion polling. Basically, there are two forms:

- ❑ Questionnaires completed by respondents and returned to the 4-H staff.
- ❑ Questionnaires completed by people who interview respondents.

Either way is fine, but certain rules and procedures must be followed if this feedback technique is to be solid and effective. So here are some points to remember:

- ❑ **Opinion polling should be conducted regularly,** not in a hit-or-miss fashion. Build it into your annual plan of work. Better yet, build it into your philosophy! Decide which 4-H educational programs and topics will benefit most from the opinion of others.
- ❑ **Who are these "others" mentioned above?** Club members, parents, leaders, organized community groups, the general public? Yes, but don't try to tackle them all at once. Be selective. Think about what you're trying to find out. You might poll the **general public** to determine their reactions to a local event or the county fair. But 4-H members might be your target for evaluating the effectiveness of a 4-H horse event or public speaking contest.
- ❑ **And once again, be sure to tabulate, report and act upon** the results of an opinion poll you conduct. You owe it to yourself, your 4-H program and to those who took time to tell you what they think.
- ❑ **Keep your questions simple and direct.** Don't try to find out everything you want to know in one lengthy questionnaire.
- ❑ **Ask uncomplicated, clearly worded questions.** Choose your wording carefully. Vague questions elicit vague responses. Avoid such questions such as "What did you think of the Leaders' Conference?" Consider this instead**:** "How did the workshop on typical behavior of seven and eight year olds help you better understand younger 4-H'ers?"
- ❑ **It's OK to include some questions that can be answered by a Yes or No response.** You probably won't want to formulate **every** question that way, even though it's easier to tabulate. It's often helpful to read respondents' opinions about some questions.
- ❑ **Keep your questions relevant to the topic of the survey, the respondents and how results are to be used.** For example, forget questions on income level, length of residence or occupation if they're not necessary.

Are Results Valid and Scientific?

Not usually, but don't be dismayed!

It's almost impossible to conduct a scientific sample of opinion through a self-completion questionnaire. That's because we have no guarantee that those who must respond will.

Also, sometimes respondents are so kind that they give responses based upon **what they think we want to hear.** Naturally, the higher the response, the more reliable the results. Besides, almost any response to your survey will be of **some** benefit to your 4-H program.

Be sure to make it easy for respondents to get their answers to you. The easier you make it, the more responses you will receive. For instance, collect responses after the workshop, or provide a box to drop them in as your audience leaves.

Most people don't bother to mail responses back! It's just too much trouble to address an envelope, affix a stamp and mail it! Research shows that providing a pre-addressed, stamped envelope greatly increases your response rate. Why? People feel guilty about removing the stamp!! **But this technique also increases your expense.**

Polling respondents by interviewing them requires time, technical know-how and organization. Your audience sample must be scientifically selected to insure valid results. Interviewers must be trained in the rudiments of surveying. This is not difficult to do, but you need to learn how by checking out some good publications on evaluations.

Another excellent source would be to seek the help of an evaluation specialist at your college or university. However, people interviewing respondents can follow the above points under *Measuring Impact* and they will still gain effective and solid feedback for your program.

Revising Your Written Plan

Gaining feedback about your programs, events and services, although important, is just the beginning of evaluating the effectiveness of your public relations effort.

To fully determine its successes or failures, you must return to the goals you set in your written plan. See *Drafting a Plan, Chapter Two*.

Your written public relations plan becomes the key to evaluating the success of your PR effort. Hopefully you have been referring to your plan periodically to measure the progress on your PR journey. But at reasonable intervals, you need to measure the progress toward both long-term and short-term goals.

If you believe you are not where you expected to be on your plan, ask yourself "why?"

- ❑ Did it just take longer than expected?
- ❑ Did circumstances change that were totally out of my control?
- ❑ Did my resources change? For example,was the budget cut or underestimated?
- ❑ Were my goals unrealistic?
- ❑ Did I just not stick to the plan by omitting some important steps?

Your answer to these questions will help you refocus your goals, redirect your efforts and perhaps even take another look at the effectiveness of a program or event.

Whether you change, modify or adjust your existing public relations plan, or decide to write a totally new plan based on new goals, keep the basics in mind. Public relations must be a planned, ongoing, honest and two-way communication effort. With this as the philosophy for your plan, you cannot fail!

So Where Do You Go From Here?

If you are fairly new to Extension, we hope the information in this book will help you mesh the good work you are already doing with an effective public relations effort. This can help keep both your program and your accomplishments well-oiled.

For the rest of you who are fairly seasoned 4-H professionals, our hope is that you picked up a few new ideas.We also realize that some of what you have read is already closely woven into your program, and that you are very much aware of the benefits of effective public relations.

Refer to the information in this book often. It's a good way to keep focused. Use the ideas to help mold the lives of children and further enhance the leadership skills and personal development of adults. This is critical to the success of 4-H.

Thank you and Good Luck!

About the Authors

Judy Baillere and Marilyn Mozenter-Spiegel began their careers in the early 1960's as 4-H agents in adjacent New Jersey counties.

In those halcyon days of 4-H, public relations was rarely mentioned. But a decade or so later, it became clear that in the competitive youth development market, public relations and marketing must become an integral part of 4-H.

Recognizing that need, the authors enrolled in the communications program at Rowan University and received their MA degrees in Educational Public Relations and Communications. This decision permanently shaped their careers and philosophy.

The authors have conducted many local, statewide, regional and national public relations seminars. They wrote numerous PR and marketing articles for ***News and Views*** and the ***National 4-H Leader*** magazine. They also designed many 4-H public relations brochures and flyers.

This book shares the following beliefs...Take a great youth development program with land-grant backing. Add talented and dedicated volunteers. With good, honest public relations, you now have the start of a blueprint for expansion.

PUBLIC RELATIONS MAKES THE DIFFERENCE...

Each chapter in this little book is packed full of practical, easy, low cost public relations ideas. As you adapt these ideas to your 4-H program, you build a blueprint for expansion.

This book illustrates how good public relations efforts can plug many program gaps caused by shrinking budgets, shrinking staff, expanding duties and increased mandates.

Follow these tips and foolproof formulas to build greater support for 4-H, retain members and leaders and grow, grow, grow!!

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