

Planning Division

Technical Assistance

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Tried and True Public Relations and Promotional Tools For Park and Recreation Providers

"Effective communication and a healthy media relationship allows for more of the public to see parks for what they really are — essential places in everyone's community."

So said a parks and recreation director in California State Parks' newest publication -- *Tried and True Public Relations and Promotional Tools for Park and Recreation Providers* -- and that's just the first line explained in the first chapter on strategic communications planning.

Published by California State Parks Planning Division, this just released publication provides terrific ideas for strategic communications planning, and public relations, and marketing for parks and recreation providers in today's competitive 24/7 media market .

Whether working at the grass-roots or at the highest level of management at a respected, non-profit park and recreation organization -- there comes a time when having the skills to serve as a media spokesman/woman for your park and recreation organization becomes an absolute necessity. In order to successfully compete, it is essential for park and recreation organizations to have its message heard – from advocacy to fundraising to increasing community involvement to promoting an event – getting your message out is the backbone of any organization.

A savvy media relations person can develop effective roll-out strategies for controversial, groundbreaking proposals and shape stories on hotly-debated issues. Sometimes an organization is lucky enough to have a key staff person, board member or program director with a proven track record in strategic communications planning, public relations, public education, events, public affairs, marketing and research, creative appeal and media relations.

The rest of the publication is just as incisive. A comprehensive strategic communications plan for creative campaigns, events, and day-to-day public relations that work within and outside of an organization is absolutely critical. Organizations have a tendency to run toward whatever is hot at any given time, even when it is not in their best interest. Without a focus and strategic direction, organizations will become a part of someone else's plan and will start reacting to others' issues. Choose effective mediums: from newspapers to magazines to radio to television to brochures to the Internet.

Finally, a former television reporter and communications director for a parks and recreation department explains bottom-line strategies: Never miss an opportunity. Be reactive without fail. Write your own stories. Have a Website and press room webpage. Use e-mail in place of faxes. Train your staff. Be proactive: What all reporters want is a good story.

Be sure to check out this just-released publication on public relations and promotional tools for park and recreation providers:

www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=24746.