

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) recognizes that businesses located in work zones have special needs. It's critical that customers and suppliers have access to businesses and continue to visit them, regardless of road work inconvenience.

KEEP YOUR BUSINESS THRIVING THROUGH COMMUNICATION

It's no surprise that road construction is an inconvenience, but well-informed drivers will naturally have a better attitude about the construction. WisDOT has created the In This Together WIS 441 Tri-County Project Communications Guide for Businesses to help you reach out to your customers and suppliers during the length of the construction project. If you communicate with your customers and suppliers early and often, they'll understand that improvements are not just necessary, but desirable. They won't be surprised by the appearance of orange barrels, reduced lanes or delays in traffic. And they will know that you are still accessible and open for business.

The In This Together guide supports businesses in a number of ways:

- Encourages businesses to become proactive in working together with WisDOT to attract business during construction
- Provides business owners with positive strategies and successful techniques to draw in customers
- Reduces the concerns and frustrations that business owners and their suppliers associate with construction disruptions, delays and detours
- Demonstrates that WisDOT wants to help businesses succeed

This guide contains promotional ideas and media strategies that we hope you will find useful, and that you can use as a springboard to generate even more new ideas to help your business during construction. Through communication and creativity, businesses can not only survive, but thrive, when road construction comes to Northeast Wisconsin.

Promotions Guide

WHAT TO DO BEFORE CONSTRUCTION

- 1) Plan ahead and get involved in the project early. Attend pre-construction meetings, ask questions and voice concerns.
- 2) Become acquainted with the project manager and the contractor to find out how long the construction will take, and what to expect in terms of noise, dirt, etc. Keep their phone numbers handy.
- 3) Notify customers well ahead of time of any construction that may affect the way they reach your business.
- 4) Notify your suppliers well ahead of time of any construction that may affect the way they serve your business.
- 5) Update your existing customer contact information.
- 6) If you know when and how long the road outside your business is going to be torn up, you can inform your customers and they can plan alternate routes.
- 7) Keep in mind every effort will be made to keep traffic open on WIS 441 Tri-County Project in both directions at all times (does not apply to nighttime closures). Let your customers know this, and that you will be open

for business throughout the construction. Post this information at your place of business and on your Web site; and send out bill stuffers, postcards and/or e-mail blasts.

- 8) Hold a special event or sale prior to construction to draw customers in – you can assure them in person that your business will still operate throughout construction.
- 9) Ask your employees to share their ideas on keeping business going during construction.

PROMOTIONAL IDEAS ONCE CONSTRUCTION IS UNDERWAY

Construction creates dust and noise. Consider increasing your cleaning schedule to keep your business as dust-free as possible, making it a more pleasant environment for everyone.

- 1) Make an inquiry of the Project Manager about temporary directional signage.
- 2) Make sure the signage identifying your business is in good shape and visible from the main thoroughfare.
- 3) If your storefront is surrounded by construction, consider making the back entrance the front.
- 4) Make sure you have clear signage directing customers to the proper entrance.
- 5) Don't underestimate the power of advertising in your local newspaper and on your local television and radio stations, before, during and after construction.
- 6) Be sure to include information about entrance availabilities and parking in all your advertising.
- 7) Reach out to your vendors, suppliers and local Chamber of Commerce to see if they have any co-op advertising dollars available.
- 8) Hold a ground-breaking event with fun activities, refreshments and business specials.
- 9) Do you have an anniversary or special event coming up? Send out a press release to get free publicity.
- 10) Share customer databases and do joint mailings with other businesses.
- 11) Develop reciprocal, cross-selling promotions with other businesses – "With any \$25.00 purchase at Julie's Florist, receive a 20% discount at Joe's Hardware."
- 12) Be proactive – look for ways to expand your business during construction:
 - Offer delivery service as a convenience to your customers who want to avoid the construction
 - Extend your hours to "off construction" hours and offer special events/sales
 - Create special promotions on certain days of the week when your business is slow
- 13) Your local Chamber of Commerce is also a great resource to see what businesses can do as an organized group.
- 14) E-commerce is a great option that will allow continued business with those who are unwilling to travel through the construction.
- 15) Offer promotions to construction workers such as providing an additional 10% off.
- 16) Offer hard-hat specials as a great way to get people in your doors.
- 17) Create a "hard hat" event: anyone who shows up at your business with any type of a hard hat will get a special discount. They can put their names in a hard hat and the winner gets a grand prize.
- 18) Send thank you notes or e-mails to your customers with an incentive offer that will get them back to your business within a certain period of time.

- 19) Host customer appreciation days to thank them for their continued support throughout the duration of the project.
- 20) If you are organizing vans or carpools for your employees, extend it to your customers, even on a limited basis.
- 21) Stagger employee hours to help ease traffic during peak hours.
- 22) Remain positive: this encourages a healthy environment for your staff, customers and suppliers!

MEDIA GUIDE

Having a business plan is one of the keys to any successful business. It allows you to create goals by which to measure your success, and lets you plan ahead for any situation – like road construction – that may affect how you do business. Having a solid communications strategy is key to a successful overall business plan, which is why we’ve created this general communications guide. The tools and suggestions you’ll find here were put together specifically to help businesses like yours offset construction challenges, and keep businesses operating as normally as possible throughout the WIS 441 Tri-County Project.

Strategy and Tactics

The simplest strategy is to get the word out and make sure everyone knows that it’s still business as usual during construction. Today’s marketers have several communication options, including the most traditional “tools of the trade” – newspaper, radio and TV. Successful marketers tend to use a combination of these tools, along with what are often considered non-traditional tools, such as “viral” marketing campaigns, Web-based social media and, of course, Web sites. Taking this more holistic approach to marketing provides businesses an unprecedented amount of flexibility to reach their target audiences through a variety of mediums and creative tactics.

Each marketer’s needs are different, and as you review this guide you should consider which of the tactics discussed here will be right for both reaching your customer and making the most of your marketing budget.

While larger budgets may incorporate several media options, small budgets can be maximized by focusing on one medium. Whether large or small, there are a variety of options that can help maximize the value of your budget.

Media Types

There are four primary types of media – print (including newspaper and magazine), online (such as banner ads), broadcast (radio and TV) and outdoor or out-of-home (such as billboards).

When purchasing media, there are many things to consider: what is the purpose of your campaign? Is it to promote an offer, build awareness for your business, or introduce a new product? All these will hopefully get more customers in the door. But the more focused your goal is, the stronger your message will be – and the easier it will be to select the type of media that’s right for you.

Reach and Frequency

There are two important elements to consider when planning a media effort for your business: reach and

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frequency.

Reach refers to the number of people who are exposed to the message you're conveying through a specific type of media (like TV or radio). Different media types can have different reach. For example, radio tends to reach a much larger audience (both geographically and demographically) than newspaper, but both can be part of a solid marketing plan, depending on your goals and audience type.

Frequency is the number of times that your message reaches an individual. More frequency leads to an increased awareness of your message. Less frequency will suffice if you are advertising an established product or service, or if your message is simple. Higher frequency would be used to introduce new products, or if your competitors are advertising at high levels. Taking both of these elements into account is crucial to successful media buying. As a suggested starting point, you might consider a 60-90+ reach of the target market with a frequency of 5. This means you will be reaching 60-90% of your audience an average of 5 times. For impact it's usually necessary to reach well over half of your audience with your message. Media sales representatives can help you develop an effective schedule that lets consumers know you are open for business during construction.

Tips for Print Media

- If you are running the same newspaper ad more than once in the same week, make sure you ask about a discounted "pick-up" rate
- If you need help creating an ad, check with your local newspaper to see if they offer a service to help you create one

PRINT MEDIA

Newspaper

Newspaper ads are a great way to build awareness for your company and provide coupons to draw customers into your place of business. Ads are tangible—people tear them out for reference, and coupons encourage customers to try your product or service. They also allow you to target specific audiences by running your ad in certain sections of the paper (Business, Sports, Home & Garden, etc.). Today's newspapers also offer more than the traditional print ad, from plastic newspaper bags to Post-it® notes on the front page, to online advertising on newspaper Web sites. Daily newspapers reach much larger audiences than weekly newspapers, but the weekly papers are community-focused, which is beneficial for area businesses.

Magazine

Local magazines can be a great way to reach a bigger segmented audience. Most magazines are focused on a specific audience (like business, women, men, political, economic, kids, etc.), allowing you to reach your desired audience. Magazines are often released on a monthly or quarterly basis, so exposure to magazine ads may not be as frequent as a newspaper ad. Lead times will vary, but generally

Tips for Broadcast Media

- Evaluate stations on format, promotions, added-value opportunities and market ranking in your primary and secondary demographics
- Always make sure to ask for added-value – if you don't ask, you won't get it
- Be firm, but fair to all sales representatives. No rep wants to go back to their manager and say they lost the buy, so they will work with you in order to earn your business
- When dealing with radio Arbitron ratings, always ask the rep for a "two-book average." This will allow you to see a one-year picture of their station, smoothing out any seasonal fluctuations in listener data
- When dealing with TV Nielsen ratings, always ask the rep for at least two rating books worth of information. That way you can evaluate programs over a period of time, rather than for a specific season
- Do not accept overnight commercials; these have little to no value and you should not be paying for them
- If reps give you a broad time frame for when your ad will air (Mon. - Sun., 6 a.m. - Midnight), make sure that they give you equal rotation throughout the dayparts. You don't want to pay a premium for spots that don't run in prime dayparts

magazine ads need to be submitted much further in advance that newspaper ads or radio spots.

Shopper Publications

Shoppers are free publications that boast high readership numbers. They combine local interest news with lots of advertising and coupons that appeal to shoppers and bargain hunters. Since circulation is based on "neighborhoods," there is no waste for the advertiser – you can easily target the demographic you want to reach. They can also be less expensive than traditional newspapers. Lead times will vary depending on the publication.

BROADCAST MEDIA

Radio

Radio is excellent at driving traffic into a place of business—it often reaches consumers on their way to shop. Like newspaper, it can be used to build awareness for your company, or alert customers to upcoming promotions. It also has the advantage of being extremely flexible and timely—marketers who want to run a promotion based on an unexpected event can often record a spot one day and have it on air the next. If your budget allows, you can also record different versions of the same commercial that complement a station's format (like Country, Rock, Pop, etc.).

Radio also has the greatest value-added merchandising capabilities of all advertising mediums. It's not just about buying commercial time—it's also about getting additional promotions by working with the station to organize giveaways, remote broadcasts and contests that keep consumers engaged and get your message out there in a variety of formats. Pricing is also based on supply and demand, making radio a highly negotiable medium.

TV

While more expensive than radio in terms of production and media placement costs, TV is a great way to reach mass audiences with a single exposure. The very nature of the medium allows for a large amount of flexibility in style and creativity, and it provides markets with a means to get their message out in clever and entertaining ways. Like radio, rates are highly negotiable, but the range of added-value opportunities is smaller. If you are interested in targeting a specific location, advertising on cable television offers the option to air your TV spot in specific zones. Lead times may vary.

Tips for Online Media

- Many national sites can target specific cities and even zip codes
- Some sites will have large minimum monthly investments, so be sure to ask about this up front
- It's more cost-efficient to buy the same size on multiple sites, as you'll spend less on creating the ad and more on getting it in front of potential customers

Social Media Campaign Tips

- Social media should be used to inform users rather than constantly sell to them
- Don't expect people to stumble across your blog or social network page or video podcast; you'll need to promote it

ONLINE MEDIA

Web Ads

Banner and other online ads allow for more exact targeting than other forms of media. Depending on the technology of the Web site, marketers can target by age, gender, keywords, dayparts, former visits and even zip code. The success of an ad can be quickly and easily measured based on the number of times a visitor clicks on your ad, allowing for message tweaking throughout the campaign, if necessary. Some big sites, such as Facebook offer "flyers"—simple ads created for you when you insert a picture, text and a header.

Purchase and placement of an ad is a fast process, and there are multiple options depending on messaging and budget, from static, print-like ads to 15-second videos. The primary goal of online ads is to drive traffic to your Web site, where visitors can learn about your business and receive information on promotions, etc.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media refers to various Web sites and online tools that give users the ability to publish and/or access information. It promotes interaction between private and public audiences through participation in social media networks, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and other online activities such as blogs and forums. Using social media is a great way to establish a genuine connection between consumers and your business and take part in conversations about your industry.

Like Web ads, social media is extremely targeted. Social media outlets allow a campaign the chance to build a genuine connection with the customer base. Good input from customers has a more profound effect on potential customers than a company just talking about itself. There are many different social media options to fit campaign budget and resource levels, from video podcasts to Facebook fan pages.

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How Do You Know Your Marketing Efforts Are Paying Off?

Different marketing techniques can be measured in different ways. To measure the effectiveness of a print ad or direct mail piece, ask the consumer to bring the ad into your place of business. If you are running a radio campaign, you can have the customer mention that they heard the ad to receive the promotion. You can also set up a separate phone number for any given campaign – if calls are coming in, your ads are working.

Most importantly, talk with your customers – ask them how they heard about the promotion you are running. Listen to their comments and concerns about the construction and your business. If you understand the wants and needs of your customers, you will be better prepared to face any challenges that may arise during construction.

After Construction

Once construction is over, consider promotions and advertising to thank your customers and suppliers for their patience and support during construction. You might want to consider pooling resources with other local businesses for a celebratory ribbon-cutting event promoted through shared advertising.

For additional strategies on how to survive and thrive during construction, please visit:

<http://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/projects/in-together/default.aspx>

If you have any questions about this communications guide, or about the WIS 441 Tri-County Project, please contact:

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