

ABC CHAPTER COMMUNICATIONS GUIDE

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Media Relations, Public Relations And
Strategic Communications Planning

Table of Contents

3 Overview	16 Media Relations	33 The Big Picture
4 Strategic Communications Planning	16 Designate a Chapter Spokesperson	33 Goals
4 Think Strategically	16 Introduce Yourself and Your Association Member Leaders	33 Audiences
4 Know Your Goal	16 Become a Valuable Resource	33 Actions
4 Identify Your Audience	17 Develop Relationships	34 Tools
4 Determine How to Motivate Your Target Audience	17 Respond Promptly	35 Community Management
5 Develop a Message	17 Volunteer Newsworthy Information	35 Moderate
5 Choosing the Right Public Relations Tactics	19 Track Contacts and Coverage	35 Analyze
6 Tactics That Will Have an Impact on Your Key Target Audience	20 Crafting News Releases and Media Advisories	35 Organize
7 Sample Communications Strategy	24 Hosting a News Conference	36 Other Content Ideas
9 Sample Chapter Public Relations Plan	26 Editorial Board Meetings	36 Resources by Channel
11 Understanding the Media	27 How to Write a Letter to the Editor	36 Facebook
12 Identifying the Appropriate Media Outlets and People	28 How to Write an Opinion Editorial	37 Twitter
13 Tracking Media Interaction	29 Building Your Public Image	37 LinkedIn
14 Media List Resources	29 Websites	37 Instagram
14 Earned Media	31 Newsletters	38 Other Channels
14 Crafting Your Message	33 Social Media	39 Photography
	33 Integrate Across Channels	41 Advertising
	33 Use Your Position and Personality	42 Public Speaking
	33 Embrace Storytelling	43 Branding
	33 Measure Traffic and Reevaluate Your Content	44 Community Outreach

Overview

How do you attract attention and more business, strengthen your credibility, establish yourself as a thought leader, increase your brand and engage stakeholders? How do you build on that momentum to achieve your goals?

The purpose of this guide is to provide you with information and insight into the development and implementation of effective communications—from writing news releases and opinion editorials to delivering speeches, using social media channels, developing advertising pieces and creating dynamic strategic communications action plans.

This guide supports both internal and external communications based on the following fundamentals:

- Who is your audience?
- What is your message?
- What is your goal?
- What do you want your audience to do once it has received your message?

Every communication has an impact on ABC and the merit shop construction industry's image and effectiveness—from the appearance of your office to your virtual background, the hashtags you use, the way staff answers the telephone, the quality of your emails and print publications and the timeliness of responding to inquiries.

It is valuable to take the time to review every communication your chapter distributes. Does each communication project the best possible image of ABC in terms of both form (design) and substance (content)?

ABC Public Affairs and Chapter Services are here to help as you work to develop and implement your communications strategy. Please feel free to email us.

- Sandy Lynch, Vice President, Public Affairs and Member Services, lynch@abc.org
- Donna Reichle, Senior Director of Public Affairs, reichle@abc.org
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Strategic Communications Planning

Think Strategically

A strategic approach to reaching your communications goals will help you realize your short-term and long-range results faster and more efficiently.

The key to a strategic media strategy is understanding where you are, where you want to go, what resources you'll need and what you'll need to do to accomplish your campaign objectives.

What does your chapter want to accomplish? What do you want to communicate and why? What do you want the media and your target audience to think, say, do and feel in response to your communications initiatives? Identify these answers, then build a strategic plan to accomplish your objectives.

Know Your Goal

As with any project, a clear goal is critical. What do you hope to accomplish with your public relations initiative? Are you working to establish a strong relationship with a specific media or reporter? Are you trying to educate an outlet on how the construction industry affects the local community? Are you trying to get meaningful media coverage of your ABC chapter events and issues? Are you working to raise the notoriety of your ABC chapter leaders and/or association? Or are you trying to do all of the above?

Write a Specific, Measurable, Action-Oriented, Realistic, Time-Sensitive (SMART) goal. Ensure that your appropriate committees and those who may be interviewed—everyone who has a part in your communications effort—understands and is working toward this goal.

You'll also want to define specific goals around specific chapter events and organizational activities (Safety Month, Excellence in Construction® Awards, election efforts, etc.)

Identify Your Audience

Determine which target audiences you want to reach. Which audiences do you believe are most important to reach in your efforts to effectively advance your goal(s)? You may have both primary and secondary audiences for any particular communications initiative. For example, you may want to reach your members with a message on where their membership dollars are being invested and making a difference. Meanwhile, you may also want to reach new high school graduates with a message about opportunities in the construction industry.



Who are your primary target audiences?

Who are your secondary target audiences?

Determine How To Best Motivate Your Target Audiences

Once you have narrowly defined your target audience, decide how you can best influence that audience.

What is important to each audience? Students are more likely to respond to career messages, ideas for making money, opportunities for training and ways to have fun when they are not working. Meanwhile, your chapter members are looking for ways to win new business and find opportunities for building their business, resources for new business and reliable, skilled employees. The general public (audiences for local television, radio and newspapers) is interested in how your events and issues affect the community and the families within that community.

Develop a Message

Each communication plan should be centered around an ABC core message.

What do you want to communicate about ABC?

Be sure your message is consistent with ABC's core philosophy.

You'll need examples, data, testimonials and resources to support your message. Reach out to Erika Walter at ABC National at ewalter@abc.org for data you can use in your interviews.

Be sure to focus on a local angle. How does this affect your local area, local projects, local students and other community members? The more you affect the local area, the more local media attention you'll attract.

Now, take that core philosophy and use your event or issue as support for that philosophy.

Examples:

- “Come to the Craft Skills Competition (chapter event) and see the opportunities for you or your son/daughter for a career in construction (ABC value proposition).”
- “The proposed legislation will discourage your friends and neighbors from bidding on government projects (issue). Join ABC and your local construction community to fight this unfair legislation by calling your local representative (ABC value proposition).”

Be sure to prepare anyone in your local chapter who may be called on for interviews.

Try
it!

Why should your target audience care about your event or issue?

What is at stake for them?

What keeps your audience up at night—and how can your issue or event help them solve that issue?

How can you best craft your message to ensure the desired response?

How does your solution meet their needs?

Which communication vehicles are best to reach your targeted audiences?

Choosing The Right Public Relations Tactic For The Job

What media outlets and other public relations tactics will best help you reach your target audiences and your goals?

- Media relations
- Advertising (print, radio, television, social media)
- Billboards
- Direct mail (letters, emails, postcards)
- News releases
- Media advisories
- Media tours
- News conferences
- Public service announcements
- Editorial board meetings
- Letters to the editor
- Op-eds
- Phone calls
- Visits
- Meetings/speeches (chambers of commerce, schools, local government, civic groups, etc.)
- Events
- Email
- Blogs
- Podcasts
- Social media
- Testimonials
- Newsletters
- Videos
- Print collateral (brochures, posters)

To create an effective communications plan, consider the following:

Cost

- How much money will you need for this initiative?
- How much money has your chapter allocated?
- How much could you raise from member firms if they were presented with a clear, outcome-focused communications plan?

Research

Conducting market research may help you strengthen your message, give it a local angle (which most media prefer) and target your message most effectively.

ABC National can provide insight on market research options that fit your budget.

What Tactics Will Have an Impact on Key Target Audiences?

Is social media the key to reaching your target audience? If so, Facebook? LinkedIn? Instagram? TikTok? Where is your target market looking?

Could local radio or newspapers be your best bet for delivering your message?

Maybe it's time to host an event that you are confident local media will attend. The local media rarely miss the "Firefighter Appreciation Day" where the local kids can ride in a fire truck. Can you put together an event that's sure to draw the local media?

Paid advertising in a regional construction trade publication or billboards may be more effective.

A strategically worded email to your target markets may be the most effective.

What is the return on investment of each option?

All options should be considered.

Remember, television and social media coverage need action and visuals that bring the story to life. The local craft competition's skills day is much more likely to get meaningful coverage than the day where contestants are taking the written test.

Television reporters are looking for exciting footage to make the story more interesting for their viewers. Social media is trending toward video, not static photos. The old fashioned "grip-and-grin" (shaking hands with a lineup of winners) is tired, old and not interesting. Instead, be prepared with ideas for compelling video:

- Tour a construction site (placing priority on safety and innovative construction techniques).
- Invite a reporter to join a member to walk around the latest stage of a local school, hospital or other construction project. Again, safety is critical.
- Demonstrate a safety technical skill. (Think: The burning Christmas tree safety video you see every year, crash test dummies, etc.)
- Invite a reporter to attend one of your apprenticeship training sessions. Be sure to identify a student to talk about the benefits of apprenticeship programs for the apprentices. Don't forget to bring a member to talk about how the apprenticeship programs benefit business owners as well. You may have someone in your community to talk about the benefits of using local labor if your target market is local.

Sample Communications Strategy

Strategy

The ABC chapter will communicate its outstanding craft training program for the employees of member firms to increase ABC craft education program participation and to increase chapter membership.

Tactics

- Utilize testimonials, compelling video and reliable data to support ABC's local and statewide training efforts to attract and generate positive attention from target audiences (chapter member firms; nonmember firms in chapter area; print, radio and television outlets; social media; blogs; websites; podcasts; newsletters, e-newsletters, websites; government officials).
- Book speaking engagements featuring ABC leaders and members with target audiences.
- Partner with associate members to highlight ABC education efforts and the benefits to their members and social media followers.

Primary Audiences

Chapter member firms:

- CEOs and training managers

Nonmember firms within the chapter's region:

- Primary: licensed trades, like electrical, HVAC and sheet metal
- Secondary: carpentry

Media:

- Print, radio and television reporters who cover education, construction/real estate and/or workforce/labor issues
- Feature writers
- Letters to the editor
- Local business and trade publications
- Social media: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok

Blogs:

- Explore blog opportunities on construction, real estate, workforce/labor issues, entrepreneurship, local news.
- Reach out to associate members and others to garner coverage via their blogs.

Website and Newsletters/E-newsletters:

- Does your local school, vocational tech program, community college, chamber of commerce, Lions Club or other civic group have a website, a newsletter or an e-newsletter that would be interested in apprenticeship programs?
- Reach out to associate members to garner coverage on their websites, newsletters and e-newsletters.

Podcasts:

- Is there a podcast your members listen to? How can you make your apprenticeship message fit their needs?
- Do your associate members host audio and/or video podcasts where your message would be relevant?

Secondary Audience

Government officials:

- Inform local government officials how the long-term success of local construction companies and employees is based on workforce development, safety and continuing education. Be sure to highlight ABC's high-quality, cost-effective leadership in the area. State government officials will want to know about the return on investment of construction education programs across the state and how this attracts workers and construction companies to the state and supports economic prosperity. Be sure to highlight the financial benefit to the state as well.

Goals

One month:

- At least five new member firms will begin utilizing ABC chapter education for employees.

Three months:

- Firms currently utilizing ABC education programs will reach out to at least one additional firm to utilize these programs.

Six months:

- Twelve new member firms will begin utilizing ABC education programs.
- ABC chapter membership will increase by 10%.
- Chapter will develop solid relationships with reporters who cover education and workforce development issues.
- ABC will have been named in positive stories in key business journals, trade magazines, local newspaper(s), radio programs and television news.
- ABC leaders and members will have appeared in at least two blogs and/or podcasts discussing the importance of education in the construction industry.
- ABC education efforts will be mentioned in at least 25% of associate members' newsletters, e-newsletters and/or websites.

One year:

- Targeted government officials will know of ABC's craft education programs and understand the unique advantages of merit-based craft training and its impact on the community and state.
- Targeted legislation germane to construction education will be supported by key local and state government officials.
- Government officials have been educated through lawmaker visits, media coverage, a direct mail brochure, radio advertisements, billboards and blogs.

Sample Chapter Public Relations Plan

Strategy	Ongoing	March	April	May	June	July	August	September
Engage members through a newsworthy event, campaign or initiative	Maintain a local media list and post news on social media.	Announce the initiative at a chapter event and on association websites, in newsletters, etc.	Contact associate members to create campaign partnerships.	Identify targeted blogs/podcasts.	Secure media coverage, podcast interviews and blog mentions.	Kick off billboard ad/s and post banner ad/s on websites, social media, etc.	Plan compelling video and photos for use on social media and websites, in newsletters and for future campaigns.	Evaluate campaign effectiveness. Report results and ROI to board and members. Share victories with ABC National staff.
	Track media, blog, podcast and social media mentions, likes, views, etc.	Prepare and distribute a media advisory and/or news releases. Follow up with targeted media to confirm interview dates, logistics.	Design local billboard ad/s and social media banner/s.	Introduce key spokespersons to targeted media. Include angles and ideas.	Announce upcoming articles and appearances on social media and in member emails.	Announce billboards to members and media.	Follow up to determine additional opportunities for news stories and podcast interviews.	
Recruit new craft professionals	Identify and train member apprenticeship spokespersons.	Identify opportunities to engage and persuade students, career seekers, reentering citizens, etc.	Update your website with current training and employment opportunities and the benefits of a career in construction.	Reach out to prospects about opportunities through social media and earned media.	Schedule training facility tours with Q&A opportunities with current students and member spokespersons.	Track successful strategies and apprentice success stories.	Share apprentice success stories on your social platforms and through #ABCMeritShopProud.	
Recruit new members	Equip member leaders to deliver the ABC value proposition to prospective members.	Create fact sheets, brochures, website content and social posts on your chapter's value proposition. Create prospective member packets with print collateral from your chapter and ABC National.	Identify member champions for targeting potential new members needing training and apprenticeship opportunities.	Assign prospective new members to a member champion to answer questions, extend personal invitations to chapter events, etc.	Secure meetings between members and prospective members.	Invite prospective members to attend a training session, safety event, networking opportunity, etc.	Follow up with prospective members to close the deal.	
Advocate for merit shop priorities with lawmakers	Create fact sheets and other materials to highlight merit shop priorities and member contributions to the community and the economy.	Identify key local and state government officials to target with campaign.	Recruit and train members to contact and educate government officials.	Secure presentations with civic organizations.	Engage with and secure meetings with government officials.	Secure media interviews around advocacy priorities and share placements with stakeholders.	Document your successes.	

Evaluation

- Measure, report and celebrate what was accomplished as part of this effort.
- Announce articles, interviews, features, highlights, etc., in your social media and in industry communications.
- Be sure to report the campaign results to your committee, chapter board and members. Show them the campaign return on investment and efforts.
- Be willing to do a post-campaign assessment that identifies what could be done more effectively with each target audience and message next time. This will give you insight for your next campaign initiative.
- Consider using surveys, content analysis from targeted media and member/nonmember questionnaires to evaluate your campaign's reach. Ask how new members learned of ABC and why they decided to join.
- Different communications initiatives may require different methods of evaluation to give you the most reliable and valid feedback. Focus groups, polls and other methods may be useful in some cases. In others, you may rely solely on the number of mentions, "likes," views or other quantifiable data.

Understanding the Media

Media and reporters come in a variety of styles. By gaining a bit of understanding and respect for what they do, you'll be able to make a meaningful connection with media who can reach your target audience.

Some reporters are journalists who are professionally trained to provide a balanced view of issues, events, organizations, industries and people. Other reporters provide commentary and opinion to their readers and viewers. You'll want to get to know reporters and their work, so that you can best meet their needs—and those of your chapter. The media's responsibility is not to tell your story.

Journalists are not adversaries.

Their job is to find the most important, interesting and pertinent news for their readers, viewers and listeners.

Television, radio, online and print media often work on tight deadlines. They are reporting on sometimes complicated issues with increasingly short segments, multiple platforms and limited word counts.

It is your responsibility to provide newsworthy information that highlights your chapter as an open, honest, credible and reliable source for industry information on issues that affect your area. You cannot just be good at what you do; you have to be good at delivering your message.

Establishing a reputation as a highly informed, reputable source for media will help ensure fair and timely coverage on important industry and ABC issues.



Local conservative columnists, bloggers and broadcasters can be advocates for the ABC free enterprise message and many ABC-friendly issues.

What's Your Objective?

The first step toward developing an effective media relations strategy is to determine what you want from the media.

Are you looking for an opportunity to build your chapter's reputation as a credible source?

Are you working to gain recognition for the chapter or its members' accomplishments?

Maybe you want to educate the masses to gain their support on an ABC issue such as the value of apprenticeship programs, passing important legislation or fighting unnecessary regulations.



Topic:

Objectives:

Target markets:

Which media will be interested in this topic or event?

Building a Media List

Once you have an objective, it's time to develop a comprehensive and continuously updated media contact list.

- Reach out to the ABC National Public Affairs team, who can build you a custom press list.
- Follow key reporters or the communication handles for major outlets on Twitter. Add these individuals to your lists.
- Be sure to use software, such as Meltwater or Cision, which allows you to gather media details so that you can create customized lists by industry, geographic area, broadcast vs. print and more:
 - Titles
 - Names
 - Addresses
 - Phone numbers
 - Email addresses
 - Social media info
 - Websites
- You may also want to keep notes about each entry to indicate what topics they cover, whether their coverage is favorable to your chapter, what stories you've discussed and other details.
- If a member of the media proactively reaches out to you for a story that will positively influence your brand or communicate ABC's key messages, add them to your media lists.



Newspapers prefer to send photographers to events with strong visuals (e.g., craft competitions, jobsites, gatherings, etc.). You can also submit photos with press releases or link to an album of photos via Dropbox or Flickr.

Identify the Appropriate Media Outlets

You'll want to include all media who may be interested in your issues, industry, events and leaders. Be sure to branch out of your local community and include media covering your region and state.

Identify both print and online versions of:

- Daily newspapers in the state
- Trade and industry publications
- Local and regional business journals
- Weekly newspapers
- Locally published government or construction trade publications
- Locally produced radio and television shows that feature news, business, political and public affairs issues
- State and local blogs covering construction, small business issues and politics
- Bloggers who cover industry issues
- Podcasts featuring construction, business and political issues

Of note: In most cases, it's a good rule of thumb to steer clear of watchdog and investigative reporters. It's almost never a good idea to proactively pitch to them.

...And the Right People

Include any media who may be interested in ABC and its issues.

Here are some titles to include on your list:

- Editor
- Program producer
- Radio station manager
- Host
- Blogger
- Reporter
- Business desk
- City desk/metro section
- Features desk
- Columnist
- Editorial
- Photo desk



Reporters and other media change often. Put a quarterly reminder in your calendar to update your list.

Track Media Interactions

Think of it as a media relationship management effort. Much as you would track customer contacts, you'll want to track your media interactions. Maintain a monthly record of all media interactions and coverage, so you can track story ideas pitched, coverage, pros or cons and other information that will help your media efforts. Include any information on the nature of the contact. This list can prove to be an invaluable resource when you are trying to promote media coverage in the future. You can track these interactions in Excel, Word or by keeping the email threads in a folder in your inbox.

Extend Your Reach

Don't limit your media outreach efforts. Instead, extend your list to include reporters on each of these beats:

- Business
- Labor
- Construction
- Industrial
- Politics
- Local
- State
- Regional
- Real estate
- Education
- Environment
- Regulatory
- Features
- Health care



Create a media list with a customer relationship management system or spreadsheet program. Include any values you may find useful when identifying or tracking media interactions. You can also ask ABC National to pull a custom press list for you.

Media Outlet	Website	Address	Phone	Email	Social media	Name	Title	Notable coverage	Other notes



Be sure to review your notes before reaching out to a reporter. You'll want to know who you're dealing with as you strategize your approach.

Media List Resources

- There are media services that will electronically distribute your news releases and announcements to media outlets.
- Other resources will track coverage in broadcast, print and online outlets, such as Meltwater and Cision.
- Sign up for Google Alerts and track social media to be alerted to any internet mentions.
- Follow relevant reporters and bookers on social media to follow what they are covering and the type of sources they are looking for.
- Contact Erika Walter with ABC National at ewalter@abc.org for assistance developing a media list.



Reporters are less interested in what you're doing—and more interested in what their audiences can learn or do with that information.

Earned Media

Earned media is coverage the media believes you've "earned"; it's not paid advertising. It's media coverage that reporters and producers deem "newsworthy." This coverage is something you will have to work for but you do not have to pay for.

Here are some examples:

- A reporter may attend a conference where a celebrity or high-level politician is the featured speaker.
- Another reporter may want to interview the main contractor on a major building project in the community.

- During graduation season, a reporter may be interested in interviewing a student who opts for a craft professional career.
- The media may want to write an article about a fourth-generation skilled worker or business owner.
- A local radio broadcaster may want to talk to one of your members about a current legislative issue.

Earned media happens when you reach out to reporters with newsworthy association activities, positions, statements, events or other information. The goal is to have media report information for the benefit of your chapter or to educate the media's target markets about an industry-related issue.



The key to winning earned media coverage is understanding what the media is looking for and providing your information in a way that fits their needs.

Crafting Your Message

Crafting your message demands that you consider the information from two perspectives: your needs and the needs of the media.

You want to communicate to select target markets what the association and its members are doing—and how well you are doing it. But the media is looking for information that informs, entertains, updates and educates audiences.

There are some topics that are inherently of interest to the media and audiences:

- Tragedy
- Health
- Weather
- Technology
- Food
- Family
- Money
- Celebrity
- Religion

If you have anything that fits into these categories, be sure to notify the media.

You will notice that your annual convention, your membership growth and how hard ABC members work do not fall into any of these categories. Most of the time, the media is not interested in covering those topics.

Instead, a significant portion of your positive coverage will be earned by strategically crafting your message to fit one of three structures:

- How-to
- Trends
- How your narrative fits in to the broader conversation

For example:

- “Five ways to get an education without going into six-figure debt”
- “Three career choices that will get your student debt paid within the first two years”
- “Four things the local hospital builder is doing to ensure better treatment for patients”
- “More high school graduates opting for skill building vs. four-year degrees”
- “The first minority-owned construction firm to win ABC Contractor of the Year”
- “Increased budgets for construction projects in Spink County”

Craft your message to fit one of these topics or structures to help ensure you gain positive media coverage.



What is your event, topic or idea?

Into which news topic area does this fit?

Brainstorm three or four approaches to make this idea fit this into a how-to or trend story.

Media Relations

Getting media coverage is, in great part, a proactive relationship-building process. It takes time, organization, effort, personal contact, skill, persistence and being in the right place at the right time. Think of it as a customer relationship effort where the media is the customer. The goal is not only to get positive media, but also to ensure that reporters will provide fair coverage in times of crisis or tragedy.

Designate a Chapter Spokesperson

Each chapter should have one person, who can be a chapter president, staff communication professional or a member, who serves as the main point of contact for the media. This individual must make building media relationships a priority. This should be the point person for all media contacts. At times, the best source may be another staff member, expert or chapter member. Assigning one staff person to traffic these interviews will make it easier and more reliable. It will also help to ensure chapter sources stay on message and meet media deadlines.



Who is your chapter spokesperson?

Who is your chapter member spokesperson?

Which other experts need to be prepared to be resources for the media?

Name	Expertise	Contact Info
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Introduce Yourself and Your Association Member Leaders

Reporters call the people they know. So, introducing yourself and your chapter leaders is the first step in getting media coverage.

Prepare a media kit that includes:

- Source contact information
- Biographies
- Calendar of ABC-related events
- Coverage ideas

Now, get on the phone, introduce yourself and ask for a short face-to-face meeting to establish yourself and your leaders as sources. Meeting at the office, a jobsite or over coffee, breakfast or lunch are all great options. Reporters want news and sources, and you have expert information and sources. This is an opportunity for both parties.

Immediately after your election of chapter officers is a good time to do this. Notify the media of the election of new chapter leadership through a news release. Incorporate ABC's philosophy and goals into the story, along with the newly elected officers' key accomplishments and officer responsibilities.

Become a Valuable Source

Get to know a variety of editors, producers and reporters who cover business, real estate, politics, labor, construction, the environment, education and health care in your region.

Sometimes you will find that they are working on stories for which you can provide ABC's perspective. Be sure to keep in mind the reporter's deadline and the audience's interest.

Have a list of members, partners and subject-matter experts on hand that you can connect with quickly in the event that you need to get up to speed on an issue. Create a group text or email thread when response time is of the essence.



Once reporters get to know and trust you as a reliable source, they will likely begin to rely on you for industry information.

Develop Solid Relationships

The reporter will call the source they know, respect and trust. Creating a solid professional relationship with local media means they will turn to ABC for reliable, credible information. There is no substitute for letting a reporter know they can always reach out to you for credible, accurate and valuable information.

Respond Promptly

Reporters are typically on a tight deadline. So, when they reach out, the first one to respond is commonly the source who gets quoted. If you don't have the answers the reporter needs immediately, take down their contact information, gather information on the story and get back to them before their deadline. Be clear that you'd like to help them and explain that you need to check details to ensure you're sharing accurate information. You may want to know who else the reporter is interviewing. Follow up even if you do not have the answer.

Volunteer Newsworthy Information

Don't wait for the media to reach out to you. Instead, actively approach reporters with quality information and ideas. Before long, these same reporters will reach out to your spokespeople as experts.

Here are a few newsworthy opportunities you will want to take advantage of for media coverage.

Local impact of construction industry issues.

Let the media know about the local impact of union/merit shop construction issues, such as project labor agreements and the PRO Act. It is best to provide specific stories and examples of how proposed policies impact the state, local economy or individual companies and their employees. Also, be sure to differentiate between the way things are and the way things would be. It helps the audience better understand the issue—and the media likes a good story.

Alert the media to chapter and member workforce development initiatives.

Your chapter's workforce development initiative, combined with trends and statistics on skilled craft professional shortages on the national level, are newsworthy. Can you relate a specific story that highlights the need your workforce education initiative is fulfilling? Is there a unique circumstance or individual that has had notable success or that reinforces the need for your training programs? These are the types of pieces a local newspaper, magazine, radio or television reporter will be interested in covering.

Invite the media to local craft skills competitions.

Local television stations are particularly interested in visual events, and they are not alone. Local radio stations have websites. Local newspapers and magazines are always looking for photo opportunities. Events such as your local craft skills competitions are a good opportunity to gain positive attention for the chapter and the industry. Before the event, consider sending a video from last year's competition to give them an idea of what the competition is all about. Issue a media advisory, then call to formally invite them to the event. Be sure to follow up and offer to escort them around the event to help them get a big-picture view of the event and offer to introduce them to a specific source, as they will want to interview an individual or two.

Let the media know about any interesting or unique construction projects in your area.

It is critical to stay in touch with journalists regularly. Notifying the media about unique projects or interesting people, companies, etc., is a great way to be useful to the media and nurture a strong relationship. Keep abreast of building projects in your jurisdiction. Work with your members to identify which projects have interesting stories surrounding them. Is there a new green technique being used? Is there a three-generation team working together on a project? Is there a mother-daughter team? Maybe one of the projects will have a significant impact on the community? Is there a unique relationship between the builder and the owner—or the community? Find an interesting angle that you would like to read about in the local paper, then pitch it to the media.

Write letters to the editor and/or opinion pieces.

Writing letters to the editor and/or op-eds can be highly effective. Consider topics that may be misunderstood or need another perspective: career opportunities in the construction industry, fair and open competition, the merit shop philosophy, PLAs, safety, green building, workforce development and legislative issues. Write a piece that highlights two or three arguments and share your chapter's position. Reference a specific story the outlet ran previously to increase your chances it will be picked up. Be sure to abide by any word count limits specific to each media outlet; in general, 250 words for a letter to the editor and 800 words for an op-ed.

Highlight member jobsite safety commendations.

Highlight member jobsite safety commendations to the media. Be sure to frame the message as newsworthy. For example, "Company A celebrates its STEP Platinum achievement." Avoid negative words such as "accidents" and "fatalities."

Survey local owners and report findings.

Survey local owners on their construction needs for the upcoming year and release this information to the media. Be sure to highlight how the results reflect or affect the reader/viewer/listeners. Example: "Construction companies say local talent is becoming a top consideration in choosing a contractor for community projects."

Comment on local analysis of national surveys.

ABC National regularly shares analyses of national surveys, economic reports, trends, etc. Localize these for your area media. Rework news releases to reflect regional details and write original news releases on interesting trends. Be sure to include your chapter's perspective.

Issue news releases on state and local political issues.

Your local media will be interested in your chapter perspective on legislative issues as they affect the community. When appropriate, issue a chapter statement with supporting examples and relevant facts. Also, issue statements after significant rulings and decisions on major industry court cases and legislative battles. Include a quote on how the action affects the community and those working in the industry.

Announce chapter awards with photographs.

Send information to the media on any awards and recognitions you present to ABC members in your chapter (e.g., the designation of a member as an ABC Accredited Quality Contractor). Include photographs of the individuals receiving these honors. Photos can often help sell your story idea.

Prepare news releases on any members that win construction awards.

Announce the results of chapter leadership elections.

Many local business journals have space dedicated to community leaders. Take advantage of the opportunity to announce your newly elected officers and incorporate ABC's philosophy and goals into the article.

10 ways to repurpose positive coverage

1. Order extra copies of magazine or newspaper articles for your member recruitment efforts.
2. Post a link to the article/video on your website.
3. Post a "check this out" on social media.
4. Reprint copies of the article with the cover of the publication for new member meetings.
5. Put reprints of the article on tables at upcoming chapter trainings, PAC meetings and other events.
6. Distribute copies of the article and publication cover to influential policy makers and elected officials.
7. Highlight the article in PAC solicitations. Be sure to include a link.
8. Post a link with a short summary on your chapter's PAC page.
9. Frame a copy for your office or lobby area.
10. Frame a copy to present to the member who did the interview.

Track Contacts and Coverage

As you grow your media relations, you'll want to track your contacts and your coverage. Make notes of topics you've pitched to select media—and their responses.

Also, track any coverage. This can be done through free, automated internet news search services such as Google or Yahoo. Be sure to do your own searches as well. Sometimes the free services miss coverage.

In addition, commercial clipping services can track news stories of interest in your region. Similar services exist for tracking radio or television programming. Check in with ABC National to tap the tracking resources used by PR agencies.

You can also follow and engage with journalists on social media platforms, even if they write a piece that does not cover construction. Send them a quick note of applause or kudos for a quality piece of journalism.

In addition, subscribe to and follow key industry, business and local news publications as a courtesy. Watch these publications for any chapter or member coverage.

Crafting a News Release That Gets Results

A news release is a summary of something newsworthy. It's a quick report of the five W's and two H's about the news.



Keep in mind that editors, producers and bloggers receive hundreds of news releases each day. To get coverage, your news release will need to make an impact.

Once you and your chapter develop a reputation as a newsworthy source, you can expect your news releases to rise to the top of the proverbial pile.

Here are some tactics that will increase your odds of getting results with your news releases:

Do

- Craft a newsworthy subject line. Make your audience want to open your email!
- Tailor your message to be of interest to a large demographic. Explain how your position, event or announcement affects the reading, listening or viewing audience—not just the ABC or construction audience.
- Consider mentioning other organizations or groups that have formally supported ABC's position on the issue.
- Use a consistent, professional news release format.
- Include the Who, What, Where, When, Why, How and How Much in the opening paragraph.
- Mention Associated Builders and Contractors in the opening paragraph.
- Mention your chapter in the opening paragraph if relevant.
- Limit the release to one page. Remember, this is a summary, not the entire story.
- Use AP style so that the media can use your release without major edits. A summary of topical style points is available in the ABC Brand Center Style Guide, and you can subscribe to the AP Stylebook Online for less than \$25/year.
- Proofread and double-check dates, grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Spell check.
- Double-check data.
- Include supporting facts.
- Use friendly URLs to avoid overloading your release with hyperlinks that the media may view as a cybersecurity risk.

- Use quotes to state opinions.
- Quote ABC spokespeople to bring the message to life.
- Start a new paragraph when beginning a quote.
- Keep quotes relevant.
- Keep quotes interesting. Make them sound like a headline or sound bite.
- Try to answer the most obvious questions a reporter will have (Who, What, Where, When, Why, How, How Much), so they do not have to edit or rewrite your news release.
- Make yourself available to answer additional questions about the topic. Be sure the contact on your release is not on an airplane or otherwise unavailable to respond promptly to inquiries.

Don't

- Do not make claims without supporting data.
- Do not write news releases for everything. Stick to newsworthy items.
- Do not expect reporters to print your news release verbatim. They might, but they may not.
- Do not distribute PDFs of news releases or email attachments. The easiest way for a reporter to use your words is to use plain or formatted text embedded in an email. Limit hyperlinks to 3-4 key supporting documents.
- Do not direct reporters to find your answers in the news release. Their job is to get more information, more quotes, more details. Their job is not to print your news release verbatim.
- Do not expect reporters to correct or rewrite your news release. Instead, keep it error-free, easy to understand and targeted toward their readers/listeners/viewers.

Components of a Professional News Release

- Date: Top left
- Contact name, phone number and email
- Release time: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE or EMBARGOED UNTIL...
Headline: Keep it short and informational, catchy and active (who or what did what)
- Include a call to action.

Follow ABC [CHAPTER NAME] at [SOCIAL MEDIA] or Visit abc.org... to learn more about association news affecting the construction industry and community.

- Include three hashmarks at the end of the release to indicate the end. # # #



Include a photo of events, awards, logos, people, etc., with your news releases. Action shots are better than grip-and-grins.

News Release



ASSOCIATED BUILDERS AND CONTRACTORS OPENS NEW APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING CENTER FOR LOCAL STUDENTS

For Immediate Release
PERMALINK
Contact:

Name, ABC | (XXX) XXX-XXXX | Email

ANY TOWN, STATE, Date—Associated Builders and Contractors [Your Chapter](#) today held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the grand opening of its new construction craft apprenticeship training center. The state-of-the-art facility will offer apprenticeship education for carpenters, electricians, heating/ventilation/air conditioning mechanics, pipefitters and plumbers. Classes will begin on [\[date\]](#) and more than [\[number\]](#) individuals have applied for training.

“We are thrilled to have a new facility to train the next generation of construction craft professionals,” said [ABC Chapter Spox](#). “The students will have a place to participate in formal classroom instruction, along with hands-on training.”

“Our state needs highly trained craft professionals to build our schools and hospitals,” said [State Labor Official](#). “The training center will attract students from all over the state to start their careers in the construction industry.”

“This new training center will make a big difference for our community,” said [the Town Mayor](#). “It will allow our young people the opportunity to follow a career path that leads to a bright future.”

The ABC [\[Your chapter\]](#) apprenticeship program, with the oversight of its industry advisory committee, utilizes the NCCER curriculum. This curriculum is nationally recognized, standardized and portable. In addition, apprenticeship instructors are required to complete formal certification in order to ensure uniform and consistent delivery of the curriculum.

The new apprenticeship training facility is located at 1000 Main St., in Anytown, State.

For more information about the center or to apply, contact [\[person at center\]](#) at [\[phone number\]](#) or [\[email address\]](#).

[Insert your chapter boilerplate here. \(see ABC National boilerplate below for an example\)](#)

Associated Builders and Contractors is a national construction industry trade association established in 1950 that represents more than 21,000 members. Founded on the merit shop philosophy, ABC and its 69 chapters help members develop people, win work and deliver that work safely, ethically and profitably for the betterment of the communities in which ABC and its members work. Visit us at [abc.org](#).

###



*****MEDIA ADVISORY*****

**ASSOCIATED BUILDERS AND CONTRACTORS TO OPEN
NEW APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING CENTER FOR LOCAL STUDENTS**

ANY TOWN, STATE, Date—Associated Builders and Contractors [Chapter] will host a grand opening celebration and ribbon cutting for its new state-of-the-art construction apprenticeship training center.

WHEN: July 1, 2022, 9-11 a.m. Remarks at 10:15 a.m.

WHO: ABC [Chapter] President [Name]
State Labor Official [Name]
[Town] Mayor [Name]

WHAT: Brief remarks by distinguished guests
Ribbon-cutting ceremony
Open house
Guided tour

The ABC [Chapter] Apprenticeship Training Center will offer education for carpenters, electricians, heating/ventilation/air conditioning mechanics, pipefitters and plumbers.

The ABC [Chapter] apprenticeship program utilizes the NCCER curriculum. This curriculum is nationally recognized, standardized and portable. It incorporates both formal classroom instruction and hands-on training.

For media credentials, please contact: [Name] [phone] [email]

ABC [Chapter] represents the [###] merit shop construction and construction-related firms in [state or region]. Follow us at [social media] for the latest association and industry news.

#

Writing a Media Advisory

A media advisory is a one-page description of a future event notifying the media and inviting them to cover the event.

You should distribute the media advisory well in advance of the event so the media can get it on their calendars.

Be sure to reissue the media advisory one week in advance and the day before the event as a reminder.

A media advisory should include:

An attention-grabbing headline

- ABC Wins Battle on School Construction Contract
- ABC Celebrates Construction Safety Award Winners
- ABC Members Rally in Support of Merit Shop Project

Critical information

- Who?
- What?
- Where?
- When?
- Why?
- How?
- How Much?
- Registration Links

Contact information

- Name
- Phone
- Email

Hosting a News Conference

When you have urgent breaking news that calls for face-to-face interaction with the media, you might choose to host a news conference.

Consider connecting any media who cannot attend via conference call, Skype or online streaming.

Consider these criteria to determine if a news conference is the most appropriate choice:

- **Relevance:** Is this newsworthy of the time and effort for the media to attend?
- **Attendees:** Will the attendees increase media turnout?
- **Exclusivity:** News conferences should be reserved for situations where attendance is the only way to cover the news appropriately. For example, featuring a statement from the new governor at the opening of a new apprenticeship training facility is a good news conference opportunity—especially if that governor spoke out in favor of job training during a recent election.
- **Legitimate news:** News conferences should not be publicity stunts. Don't risk losing your credibility with the media.
- **Complexity:** News conferences can be a good option when the topic or experience is too complex to be addressed through a news release.

Once you decide a news conference is the best strategic option to release your news, prepare to get the best attendance and the best coverage:

Before

- **Scheduling:** Check schedules to ensure you're not competing with other important news. You won't be able to predict breaking news but avoid conflicting events when possible. For example, avoid holidays, national events, local celebrations, etc., unless they are directly related to your news.
- **Time of day:** The ideal time to hold a news conference is between 10 a.m. and 12 p.m. This allows reporters to get the story and meet their deadlines.
- **Location:** You'll want to hold the news conference at a location easily accessed by the media.
- **Amenities:** Make sure the area is well lit with plenty of electrical outlets (have power strips and extension cords available). Secure Wi-Fi and have a password available for media and visitors. Consider the challenges of outdoor locations. You may want a tented area in case of inclement weather.
- **Staging:** Your presenters and the media will want a podium with a place for them to mount their microphones. If you expect a large group of broadcast journalists, consider contracting with a sound engineer who will provide mixers for the media to plug into. Consider reserved seating for print reporters and a news crew parking area for equipment trucks.
- **Room:** Think "standing room only." A full room creates the perception of an important topic worthy of coverage by many media. So, a small room that can accommodate the expected number of journalists is better than a large room with too much empty space.
- **Signage:** Prominently feature your ABC chapter logo on the front of the podium or with a curtain behind the speakers. Consider having some of your member company representatives or board members stand behind the presenters. Be sure the staging doesn't detract from your message.

- **Look again to guarantee all safety precautions are taken:** Under no circumstances should you put the media in a situation where they can observe safety violations of any type, even perceived violations. Should your speakers be wearing hard hats? Steel-toed boots? Are cables secured? Is appropriate caution signage, etc., in place? Follow the safety guidelines on the [ABC Brand Center](#).
- **Promotion:** Be sure to give journalists as much notice as possible before your news conference. Alert the media wire services in your area. Send out a media advisory. Follow up by phone to invite key journalists. You may ask journalists to RSVP. (Don't make an RSVP a requirement and don't turn away journalists who did not RSVP.)
- **Pre-event materials:** Provide a media advisory, news release quoting dignitaries, location, time or other new conference logistics. Include biographies, issue fact sheets, related photos, etc., to help media prepare for the event.
- **Spokesperson preparation:** Prepare the spokesperson to make a statement with key talking points. You'll want to help your spokesperson practice to ensure the most professional and effective message delivery. Prepare the spokesperson and other sources to answer media questions following the prepared remarks.
 - Brainstorm questions you expect to get, those you hope to get and those you hope not to get. Now, prepare appropriate answers.
- **Emcee:** The emcee has five roles:
 - Introduce each speaker with prepared remarks.
Be sure to include the speaker's name, title, organization and a brief description of what that speaker will address in their remarks. For example, "Jane Smith is president of XYZ Construction and is the 2022 chair of the ABC [chapter name]. She's going to explain ABC's position on this issue and what it means to construction companies and taxpayers in this area."
"Next up is Bob Brown, manager of safety at LMNOP Construction. He's going to share some of the safety and employment statistics for the months leading up to this announcement."
 - Invite media to ask questions at the appropriate time.
"After their remarks, you'll have an opportunity to ask questions."
 - Oversee the question-and-answer period.
"The speakers have about 10 minutes for questions after their opening remarks."
 - Bring the session to a close announcing time for "just two more questions."
 - Thank the media and invite them to reach out with more questions.

During

- **Greeter:** Position someone at the entrance to welcome the media, identify which media is represented and ensure they have what they need, including interviews and on-site materials.
- **On-site materials:** Provide handouts and a friendly URL for digital files including a news release quoting the people who will be speaking. If the speaker will use prepared remarks, make those remarks available to journalists. Suitable photographs, biographies and issue fact sheets are also helpful for the media. Again, be sure to have print and electronic versions available.

After

- Follow up with any details promised to journalists.
- Follow up with all journalists to see if they have additional questions.
- Monitor media coverage based on which media attended.
- Distribute coverage to your staff, board and member companies using internal and social media.

Optional:

Consider having water, coffee, snacks, etc., available during news conferences.

Never serve alcohol at a news conference.

Editorial Board Meetings

Note: Meeting with the editorial board of your local paper is a BIG win.

The editorial section of a newspaper—in print and online—is where editors weigh in on a wide range of issues affecting the community, region or country. These written columns represent the official viewpoint of the publication and sometimes are cited by the proponents, and opponents, of a particular issue.

Arguably the most influential pages of a print publication, it can be beneficial to get an editor to weigh in on ABC's side of a controversial issue.

A larger newspaper makes decisions on what to print on the editorial page through its editorial board, which usually consists of five to 10 writers or editors who work for the publication. The group's responsibility is to determine the paper's position on issues and political candidates, then publish the editorial.

Contact the editor of the editorial page of your local newspapers to request an editorial board meeting. Be prepared to present your side of the issue. You'll need data, the local impact, the history of the issue, recommendations and examples. Prepare a spokesperson (ideally one of your chapter's executives or elected leaders).

If the publication is committed to a position that differs from ABC's position, offer to submit an opinion editorial.

If the paper has not committed to an editorial position and seems open to hearing ABC's position, try to set up a meeting with the newspaper's editorial board and the chapter's chair and/or chief staff officer.

Call to Action

Ask if the newspaper will write an editorial supporting ABC's position on the issue.

If questions arise that require follow-up information, be sure to provide that information to the editorial board as soon as possible.

Prepare Thoroughly

Share data and trends. The more local, the better.

Be prepared to summarize the history of the situation concisely.

Share the impact to the local community, economy, contractors and employees.

Be prepared with recommendations for solutions.

Assign a role to each ABC representative who will attend.

Prioritize main points and ideas.

Familiarize yourself with the staff you'll be meeting with—their type of writing, positions, past experience with the industry, reputation, etc.

Prepare a media kit with fact sheets, data, biographies, ABC information, issue information and contacts.

How to Write a Letter to the Editor

The philosophy behind various newspapers' letters to the editor pages can differ dramatically, and you can make each work to your advantage with the right approach.

Some editors see their letters to the editor section as a community bulletin board where readers will find any and all sorts of opinions. You might see a letter from a reader complaining about a recent article next to a letter complaining about the city's holiday decorations. This unrestricted policy is typically found at smaller papers, where editors may find it challenging to fill space. You can take advantage of this situation by preparing a brief, well-written, well-reasoned letter explaining ABC's position on an issue and its impact on the community.

A more common approach taken by most mid-sized and large newspapers, which receive many potential letters to the editor each day, is to consider the letter's relevance to a recent article. They only print letters to the editor that offer feedback, criticism or praise for articles and opinion columns that have recently appeared in the paper.

Here are additional guidelines for writing letters to the editor:

Cite facts, figures, data and trends. Document your assertions.

Watch your tone. A reasoned and respectful tone is best. You can be direct and critical without being unprofessional. You may need this publication or journalist to be open to your messages in the future. Confront the content; respect the journalist.

Word count. Word count is an important yardstick in publishing. Be sure you're clear on word count requirements rather than risk having a good letter rejected because it's too long or too short. Cite the story you are responding to at the beginning of your letter. In the opening paragraph, refer to the columnist, headline title and date of the article.

Write and rewrite. The best-written and most succinct pieces often are selected. As with any communication leaving your

office, have several people review your letter for grammatical errors, typos, punctuation errors and redundancies. If you're not sure about punctuation, capitalization, abbreviations or other styles, consult the ABC Style Guide on brandcenter.abc.org.

Meet deadlines. Respect deadlines. Most media do not have flexibility on deadlines. If you want to have your letter or op-ed printed, meet the deadline.

Meet submission requirements. Some publications may prefer your piece be submitted as a Word document, through an online submission form or in the body of the email. Make it a practice to not submit your LTE as a PDF, but instead a Word document or in the body of an email so that the editor can easily copy and paste the content. The editor may also edit your submission for space or style considerations and ask you to approve final copy.

Follow up. It is important to follow up to ensure the editorial desk received your letter. A quick phone call or email may also help solidify a relationship with the publication and help ensure future coverage of important ABC issues.

Provide contact information. Most media will follow up with the author directly to verify the letter's author and home address before running it. Include a daytime phone number, a cell number and your email with your letter. If you haven't heard anything on your letter after a few days, give the editor a call and inquire politely.

Persevere. Don't be discouraged if you don't get published immediately. Continue to send letters on a variety of topics that affect ABC, your community and merit shop construction. Eventually your persistence is likely to pay off.

ABC National develops a number of template letters to the editor throughout the year for chapter use. Reach out to the ABC Public Affairs team or visit nationalconnections.org/communication to see what is available or suggest a new resource.

3 Ways to Watch Your Tone

Check your language. Word choice can quickly change a benign statement to an aggressive statement. "The decision to support the effort needs to be carefully reconsidered." Not "Supporting this decision would be stupid, lazy and irresponsible."

Simply making two sentences into one can soften the message and make your message more informational and less confrontational. "It's over. Don't bring it up again." This statement comes off aggressive. "It's over, so it won't be brought up again," is less aggressive.

Watch the way you emphasize words. All caps read as shouting, which is commonly seen as inflexible and less reasonable. Instead, opt for appropriate standard use of capitalization.

How to Write an Opinion Editorial

Opinion editorials, or guest essays, express the opinion of an individual or a group but are not necessarily written in response to a news story.

It is more challenging to get an op-ed into a newspaper than a letter to the editor. The goal of the editorial page of a newspaper is to give readers an opportunity to voice their opinions on matters of community, national or public interest. You cannot just send it to the newspaper and hope it is published. You must make a pitch directly to the staff journalist or editor.

Editorials most likely to be carried are filled with factual data supporting an argument, so be sure to link to documentation of statistics, survey data,

etc. They are written like a good news story, with an interesting lead at the beginning, the body of supporting evidence in the middle and a strong conclusion encouraging readers to take a particular course of action at the end.

Start by finding submission information on the websites of media outlets. Contact the individual responsible for overseeing the editorial page and offer the idea of an opinion editorial on a particular topic from the chapter chairperson or chapter president. Be sure to find out the newspaper's exact parameters for opinion editorials, as well as how the piece should be submitted.

**Pro
Tip**

Expect the publication to contact the author of an editorial to authenticate it. If you ghostwrite a piece for your chair or another member, be sure that member has a copy and is familiarized with it.

**Pro
Tip**

Reading op-eds and letters to the editor in the publication you're targeting is the single best indicator of acceptable style for those publications. Read five of their op-eds and letters to identify standards, styles and approaches that are used successfully.

Public Relations *Building Your Public Image With Public Relations*

ABC chapter public relations professionals have two primary goals:

- Provide information to members and prospective members about the chapter's latest programs, products, services and activities on behalf of its members.
- Successfully build the chapter and member brand and communicate merit shop construction's impact on the industry and the economy with key audiences, including the general public, media, opinion leaders and elected officials.

In this section, you will find tools you can use to effectively communicate with your members, media contacts and the local community. When using these tools, remind yourself of the universal foundation for communicators:

- Tailor your message to your audience.
- Carefully define your purpose: Are you informing? Inspiring? Demonstrating? Persuading? All of the above?
- Craft your message to get the specific response you need. What do you want your audience to think, say, do or feel as a result of your efforts?

Be creative. Be succinct. Experiment with new approaches. Every market, every industry sector and every chapter has its nuances. There are many effective ways to make your chapter's voice heard; you must find tactics that work for your chapter.

Websites

Websites are a valuable resource for members, prospective members, craft students, like-minded organizations, sponsors, the public and the media. It is an official resource for your chapter's announcements, background, contact information, services, activities and statements. It is the digital version of brochures, position papers, annual reports, trends, biographies, announcements and more.

Website tips:

- Keep your website current by frequently adding new content to drive traffic. Your website is your calling card for your organization. Direct members, media, sponsors, new prospects and others to the site via your social media, appearances, courses, events and more.
- Set a goal of "error-free" for your website. Edit and proofread everything. Assign responsibility to your communication manager or other staff to catch and correct any errors, typos and needs for updates. Your reputation is, in part, created by the accuracy and interest of your website. Errors can detract from the overall message and undermine your credibility.
- Ensure your images are visible and your links are active.
- Make sure your website is consistent. Use the same design and color palette throughout the website and follow the [ABC Brand Guidelines](#). It should look like one cohesive document as opposed to separate pieces.
- Put important information and links at the top of each page.



Readers absorb computer screens across the top, then from top right to top left, then down the page, with a quick scan across the center of the page, then down. It's an f-shaped pattern. Experts suggest you have only 20 seconds to gain their attention before they turn to something more interesting.

Do's and Don'ts for Writing for the Web

Do

Rearrange your writing so the most important information appears in the first paragraph. That way, if visitors only read the beginning, they still know what you wanted them to know.

Call attention to important pieces of text by making them bold.

Link important facts, figures, trends and other information to additional sites—including pages on your chapter website. Linking to government, university or other trustworthy non-ABC sites increases your credibility.

Write less. Use half the word count (or less) of conventional writing.

Break up a daunting wall of text by using bullets, short sentences and short paragraphs. Express only one thought per paragraph—even if that means you have a single-sentence paragraph.

Put the most important information of every paragraph at the top of that paragraph.

Use headlines and subheads. If your reader looks at your page for only a few seconds, what do they get? Using headlines and subheads helps ensure they will get what you want them to get.

Don't

Don't bury information. Online users have no patience for digging through paragraphs of information to find the most important nuggets.

Don't overuse bold, italic, underlining or all caps. Overuse will dilute your message and irritate readers.

Don't convince yourself it is acceptable to have long paragraphs and pages of text for even the most complicated issues. They will not read it, and you will lose the interest of people who otherwise might absorb your message. Instead, opt for more short stories and links.

Don't ignore broken links on the website. It frustrates those who are most interested. Make sure the information is relevant and nonrepetitive and users know what to expect.



Most cameras are set to take photos at 300 dpi resolution. But website standard is a resolution of 72. Downsizing your resolution to 72 will make your page look good without slowing down the load time.

Using Images/Infographics on Your Website

Images are a great way to spice up your website and add visual interest to your pages. Every website should contain images. Be judicious with advertising, banners and other images that look like advertisements. Readers tend to be wary of anything that does not provide valuable information. Find guidelines for photo and video safety and copyright compliance on the [ABC Brand Center](#).

Newsletters

Newsletters can be a valuable way to communicate with your members, potential members, craft students, lawmakers, like-minded organizations and the media. An attractive, professional, easy-to-read newsletter can be a vital tool to engage members to help maintain their interest, participation and engagement with the association.

While a strong newsletter can help you develop a relationship with your readers through interesting, helpful articles in a quick-to-read format, a newsletter can be labor-intensive. If the newsletter gets passed over for other more pressing emails, your return on the time and energy invested will be meager.

ABC National has teamed up with Constant Contact to provide easy-to-use, professional email marketing templates and tools to create their own newsletters and emails and help chapters and National collaborate effectively, frequently and safely with member companies across the country. New and existing accounts with Constant Contact receive a 30% monthly discount through the partnership. Please contact a member of the Public Affairs team to learn more.

Planning Your Newsletter

Content: Decide what topics you are going to cover. Chapter activities, industry issues, guest columns on the economy, policy and upcoming programs should be included. Further, your newsletter could contain articles that educate your members on important industry news, best practices, honors and awards and accomplishments. To get the best results from your newsletter, focus on the reader and the results the reader gets from ABC efforts. Articles highlighting important, high-impact, interesting activities after the fact help encourage attendance at the next chapter event. For

example, interview a participant in a leadership program about how they will use their new skills; highlight a new apprentice on the job; talk to a state senator about why they supported an ABC issue. This post-event coverage creates the FOMO (fear of missing out) to pull members to future events.

Writers: Credible and able writers are available if you know where to look. Many successful chapter newsletters feature regular columns from expert contributors. Your chapter attorney, for example, might be happy to write a column covering legal issues or recent court decisions that affect contractors. Ask your safety trainer or representative to submit content regularly on health and safety issues. Your leadership program trainers will also appreciate the opportunity to write a piece. Maybe a regular column from your government affairs professional, chapter president or committee chairs would be informative. Similarly, many suppliers of construction services are willing to provide you with good material on technical innovations and new project management techniques.

Newsletter Website: As opposed to using your newsletter as an email, create a newsletter website or webpage/blog on your chapter website. With each new issue, you can send an email with newsletter highlights and links to the specific articles on the newsletter website. This will allow you to tempt readers with a variety of articles without publishing an especially long email.

Design: To get ideas, look at newsletters and magazines you find attractive, interesting and appealing. Preloaded email design templates are available for Constant Contact users.

The name of the newsletter and any corresponding artwork at the top of the page sets the tone for the publication and should look appealing and professional.

Building Relationships With a Newsletter

Send it out consistently (weekly, monthly, etc.)

Present a professional and polished product.

Feature relevant, valuable content.

Keep articles accurate, concise and interesting.

Stay focused on the reader— not just the chapter.

Entertain and educate.

Promoting Your Newsletter

Announce new editions on your social media platforms.

Tag members, guest authors and lawmakers featured in your social media posts.

Post a link on the signature line of contributing staff members.

Ask contributors to post links on their social media.

Include print versions in prospective and new member packets.

Include a link to your newsletter on your chapter website.

Headlines: Headlines need to be short, catchy and informational. Here are two winning formulas for headlines that draw in readers:

1. Lists
 - Four ways to increase efficiency
 - Five things your senator needs to know
 - Three ABC programs to take advantage of
 - Three things new apprentices are using immediately
 - Four lessons about leadership
2. Trends
 - Construction leaders can expect more workforce shortages
 - General contractors notice a steep increase in some materials costs
 - Construction safety concerns: The fatal four and heat safety
 - The new normal: What to expect during the hiring process
 - The easiest way to network with merit shop contractors

Photos: Use good quality photos in your newsletter to make the newsletter visually appealing.

Promote It: It is not enough to have a good newsletter. You'll need to promote it on your website and on your social media platforms to get the impact you want. Print a set number of copies to distribute to member sponsors and guest columnists.

Bragging Rights: Do not forget to use the newsletter as a subtle self-promotion tool as well. Just as your members need to be reminded about what their dues money pays for, they also need to be reminded that you are doing a good job on their behalf.

Sponsors and Advertisers: One way to offset the cost of your newsletter is to solicit advertising and sponsorships. Associate and supplier members are good advertising prospects because a chapter newsletter allows them to have direct access to all your contractor members and to identify their firms as being an ABC supporter.

Sender: The sender of the newsletter can make the difference between gaining a reader and ending up in the reader's trash. Consider creating an email unique to the newsletter, so the sender is abcnewsline@abc.org. Or will your members respond better to an email from the chapter president? Chair? Communications director? Committee chair? You may need to experiment to see what gets the greatest response from your members.



Monitor your deliverability and open rates to determine your newsletter's impact.

Deliverability and Open Rates

Deliverability: The likelihood an email will make its way into your user's inbox without getting bounced or trapped in a spam filter.

Open rate: The number of subscribers who have opened your email.

Here are some ways to maximize deliverability and open rates:

- Phone first. Design your newsletter to be optimized for readability on mobile devices. Several newsletter platforms, such as Issu, offer this as a feature.
- Use photos judiciously. Because most email systems automatically block images and most users rely heavily on their preview screen to decide what to open, make sure the content of your newsletter is understandable without images. Never send your entire newsletter as an image.
- Make it easy for readers to opt out of receiving your newsletter. Regulations around spam and other unwelcome email are fast-changing. Many states require individuals to opt in as a way of agreeing to receive your newsletter. Meanwhile, be sure to include an "unsubscribe" option.
- Include links to your chapter website and newsletter website in every edition.

Social Media

Seven in 10 Americans now use social media to connect, network, get news updates, share information and entertain themselves (and others). In fact, nearly half of Earth's population is active on social media. On average, each of those active social media users has more than seven social media accounts and spends 142 minutes a day on social media. Approximately 81% of small and medium-sized businesses and 91% of large retailers use social media. An impressive 97% of construction industry professionals also use social media, with LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter as the top three platforms.

Your ABC chapter should be capitalizing on social media, and you can execute a thoughtful social media strategy with some planning, creativity and diligence.

Social media channels provide opportunities to share breaking news, best practices and other resources, as well as engage with other ABC members and industry professionals on construction and association news and initiatives. Social media is also a great way to authentically interact with membership and connect with traditional and online media sources.

Use the hashtag #ABCMeritShopProud to connect with other ABC social media posts and be featured on ABC National's homepage.

Integrate Across Channels

Creating platform-specific content is always preferable, but it's time-consuming work and not always an option for chapters without the staffing resources.

Creating content and maintaining an active social media presence requires time and resources that are often scarce. When you are creating great content for just one channel, you're missing out on reaching other groups of people across different networks. Each time you create, write or design something for Facebook, make sure to think about how it can be used across your channels. You will be expanding your reach without exerting too much more effort.

Use Your Positioning and Personality

Make sure that you reflect and reinforce the ABC brand in all your social media communications. Highlight content that sets ABC apart and use your brand attributes to create a consistent voice across your channels.

Embrace Storytelling

Your social media platforms should regularly feature stories about individuals. Your primary audience of potential participants will connect to stories that feature individuals like themselves. And if you collect those stories in a methodical way, you'll always have a piece of content to feature during an otherwise slow week.

Measure Traffic and Reevaluate Your Content

As you create your content posting calendar, review the analytics for all of the tools you use (e.g., Facebook Insights) to see what's working. It pays to create a posting routine, so you can easily track patterns of usage and then tweak based on that feedback. For example, if you keep track of more than just the data that Facebook provides (i.e., any outside influences, exactly what type of post it was, etc.), you can then make more informed decisions for your future content calendar.

The Big Picture

Goals

Before deciding to spend time and resources on social media, it's important to understand what you're trying to achieve. What are your goals on social media?

Audiences

Who are the groups you want to reach using social media? Members, potential members, craft students, like-minded organizations, lawmakers and press are a handful to keep in mind. Once you decide who your priority audiences are, make sure you are using the right platforms and targeting them with the right kind of content.

Actions

Once you have your priority audiences in mind, it's time to think about what actions you want them to take. This will determine the type of content that you share with them, and how you use it on each of your platforms.

Tools

Once you know which audiences you want to reach and what you want them to do, it is time to think about where you can reach them. Each social network has different capabilities and reaches different people, so when thinking about where to put your resources, make sure you're choosing the right platforms. See below for a quick synopsis of what each network is particularly good for.

Your social media efforts should support and reinforce what you're already doing online—actions like influencing someone to attend/sign up/follow will come from an accumulation of touchpoints on your website, by email, on social channels and through in-person meetings.

In an ideal world, you could have a strong and thriving presence on each of these channels and more up-and-coming platforms as well. However, time and resources are limited, and it's best to commit your time to a handful of social networks instead of spreading yourself thin across several of them. The best way to decide where to spend your time is to know where your audience is, and how you can engage them to achieve your goals. Which platforms will reach your audiences and achieve your goals?

Channel	What it's good for	Sample audience actions
Facebook	Watercooler content News Sharing visual content Reaching new audiences Telling stories	Joining a group for a specific audience Sharing a volunteer profile Liking or commenting on a photo Tuning in to Facebook Live
Twitter	News Quick messages Distributing content Connecting with other like-minded organizations Customer service Live updates from an event or a conference Shout-outs from members	Mentioning ABC in a tweet Retweeting ABC Quoting ABC Following ABC Tuning in to Twitter Live
LinkedIn	Professional conversation Positioning ABC as a thought leader Connecting groups of people to each other Connecting with other like-minded organizations	Mentioning ABC Sharing ABC content Following ABC
Instagram	Authentic content Behind-the-scenes images Personal images	Tuning in to your members' live stories Sharing live stories from events or from behind the scenes Sharing members' stories/posts on your story feed Commenting on posts

Community Management

It's important to know how much time you can devote to social media each week and make sure that your time is spent efficiently and effectively. Even if it is only one or two hours a week, be honest! That will help you set manageable goals for your social media presence. Ask your colleagues to pitch in, especially at member events and craft competitions. Most business accounts on social media allow multiple individuals to access the accounts simultaneously.

Regular Social Media Tasks

MODERATE

- Follow new followers on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.
- Interact promptly! Answer questions and comments on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn and direct them to your webpage and resources.
- Direct outstanding questions and comments to the right people.
- Scan ABC National's social platforms to see if there are people that should be funneled to your page.
- Do not delete comments unless threats or profanity are involved.

ANALYZE

- Dig into the analytics and insights on each platform to learn your audience, know what time of day they check the platform and the type of content that resonates well in each space.
- Drill down on specific high or low points and see which posts or events correlate with them, and then take note of future posts that are similar.
- Review Google Analytics to see incoming traffic to your website from social networks.

ORGANIZE

- Scheduling posts in advance is made easy with paid services like Hootsuite, but be mindful of scheduling posts too far in advance. With ever-evolving news cycles, your content can be mistaken for insensitive if it is posted at the wrong time.
- Review the content calendar to note upcoming posts.
- Make sure that all your planned content is still relevant.

MONTHLY/WEEKLY

- Create your content calendar by mapping out what you will be posting and talking about on your social channels this month. Keep in mind overarching organizational goals and campaigns, any external holidays or events and any content that you know will be available (like a report that is coming out) Check out ABC's calendar of news opportunities at abc.org/news for ideas.
- Align social media efforts with your overall communications calendar and big pushes for sign-ups. Review to make sure you know how and when social media can fit into those organizational priorities.
- Review the social media plan to make sure all the goals, audiences and channels are still relevant, and see if any newer channels (i.e., Snapchat and TikTok) should be included.
- Walk new staff members or volunteers through social media guidelines.
- Update the analytics dashboard with new data points and review for patterns.
- Maintain your social media pages (update your Facebook banner photo, check your Twitter bio, etc.).

WEEKLY/DAILY

- Read social media comments.
- Check Twitter @ replies.
- Search hashtags on Twitter and Instagram to check activity.
- Create, schedule and post, even if the content would work best on the weekends.
- Gather the content you want to post each week (write status updates, find pictures, gather interesting news articles).
- Stockpile content for future posts and campaigns.
- Review current member content to see if there are any good blog posts to repost or share on social media.
- Comment on other ABC member pages or relevant blogs to drive and deepen engagement. Check out ABC's calendar of news opportunities at abc.org/news for ideas. Visit ABCMeritShopProud.org to join the conversation.

Other Content Ideas

- Keep an eye out on for industry recognized social media campaigns/ weeks such as Careers in Construction Month, Construction Safety Week, Women in Construction Week, etc. ABC National shares social media assets and content with chapters in advance of most industry recognized events via email to the listserv communication@abc.org.
- Host a photo contest or giveaway.
- Host a fundraiser.
- Determine a theme and ask people to upload their photos and tag your page to enter the contest.
- Share the winning photo at the end of the month.
- Use graphics and statistics that motivate your audience to share.
- Utilize personal profiles of staff, members and craft students that inspire.
- Consider profiling members, individual contractors and individuals who have taken advantage of ABC discounts.
- Include a photo and answers to a standard set of questions.
- Experiment with themed events based on the day of the week—these are just examples that you might need to tweak to pick up on local memes or translate to themes that make sense in your area:
 - Throwback Thursday/Flashback Friday/Member Monday/Teacher Tuesday/Savings Sunday
 - Merit Shop Monday (post a photo of an exciting location, ask users to share)
- Post an ABC member of the week (profile of a member).
- Post video interviews or profiles.
- Post question and answer sessions.
- Feature photos and updates of your staff and team in action, so that users feel like there are real people behind ABC.

Resources by Channel

Here are some basic channel-specific best practices for your social media presence. Use them as a guide whether you are just getting started or trying to deepen your engagement with a community that already exists. This is not an exhaustive guide to each channel, but rather a starting point.

Facebook

Facebook can serve as a main hub for your social media presence, since the specific content that you create for your page can also be used for a variety of other platforms. Think of it as the water cooler of the platforms. If you only have time to focus on one channel, Facebook offers the easiest access to the broadest audience possible, and the best chance of reaching new people.

When you are creating content for Facebook, keep in mind that the main ABC National page serves as an aggregator for all the different chapter pages. Therefore, consider creating content that would appeal to a wide audience, so ABC National (or other chapters) can share it with the wider community.

Fill out your “about” section to include the most up-to-date information. This space could be used to briefly describe who you are and what you do at a glance (i.e., your mission statement). Include your chapter’s phone number!

Use just your logo as a profile picture, which are available on the ABC Brand Center, and then use your banner photo to highlight particular campaigns, when appropriate. You want the profile picture to be consistent and easily recognizable in your fans’ feeds.

If you’re looking to appeal to a broader audience, engage with multiple groups and share your content, then a page is the best place to do that.

Post no more than three times a day. Ideally, once a day or every other day.

Because of the way Facebook works, it’s better to post fewer times a week and get higher engagement on those posts. If you post frequently, and see a decline in shares and likes, then your posts might not show up in your fans’ newsfeeds.

Post on the same days at the same time for at least one month, then begin varying by one element—i.e., at a different time but same days—to find your most engaged times. You can also track engagement levels when you view the analytics.

Twitter

Twitter requires you to get your message across in 280 characters or less. It is important to take the time and tailor your content for each platform, so that your audience knows that you are paying attention. Twitter is also a great customer service tool and offers a lot of opportunity for professional networking with members, like-minded organizations and press. If you are not yet on Twitter, consider creating an account and then reusing much of your Facebook content to get it going.

- Make use of the banner photo space.
- Use a profile picture that clearly differentiates your account from other ABC accounts (such as your specific chapter logo).
- Follow the accounts that are following you if it makes sense; on a weekly basis, follow new followers.
- Regularly update your lists when you follow new followers.
- Begin to post daily, so that you are top of mind for your followers.
- Once you start posting regularly, try to post no more than three to four tweets a day, including retweets.
- Suggested balance:
 - One Facebook post (sends traffic to your page and keeps your messaging consistent)
 - One participant or volunteer update
 - One retweet or repost from another ABC partner
- Replying to individual tweets can be more frequent, as they don't fill up all of your followers' newsfeeds.
- Cross-post content from Facebook to save time on creating Twitter-specific content.
- If it's a status update, post as a tweet.
- If it's a piece of content like a photo or infographic, post as a link back to your Facebook page.
- Do not automatically link the two properties; instead, take time to tailor the content specifically for Twitter.
- Keep an eye on trending topics to find places where you can insert ABC into the conversation.

LinkedIn

People tune out irrelevant or promotional messages to focus on useful, engaging content. Companies that inform and engage are not just selling, they're building relationships. LinkedIn helps ABC forge relationships with the world's largest professional community. LinkedIn users are almost 50% more likely to buy from a company they engage with on LinkedIn. A whopping 80% of LinkedIn members want to connect with companies, because those connections provide them opportunities to enhance their professional decision-making.

- Find the right groups.
- Step up to the mic.
- Be a connector.
- Engage your colleagues.
- Announce your company page to customers and partners.
- Add a "follow" button to your website.
- Dive into the comments.
- Invite customers to write reviews
- Establish growth goals—measure your success.

Instagram

Instagram has more than 1 billion users and an estimated 71% of U.S. businesses use it. The content must look different and stand out amongst your other platforms because it's primarily focused on images. The caption can be the same, but you need those behind-the-scenes moments that you will not find elsewhere. Give your audience a reason to engage with your content. Keep the audience in mind and what their personal interests might be—sports, food, family, politics, scenery, heavy equipment and the like. Add to Instagram stories often and spoon feed your audience content that requires them to interact with it.

- Focal points are the visuals, so the visuals must be good.
- People go to social media for authenticity, so the content on this platform **MUST** be authentic and visually compelling.

- Make sure the content on this platform stands out among other platforms. Give your audience a reason to visit with that behind-the-scenes content you cannot get anywhere else.
- Rule of thumb: Post no more than three times per day.
- DON'T make your audience go looking for your content. That said, always post to your story, even if it means sharing your post directly to the story. You want to make your content as visible and easily consumable as possible. Here's a useful statistic: 500 million Instagram accounts use Instagram stories every day.
- Be trendy with your language; use fun emojis. This platform is not as professional as the others.
- Hashtags are important. The average post on Instagram uses nearly 11 hashtags. That's one of the main ways your audience can grow.
- Tag people. They will share/like/engage with your content.
- Add a location. Posts with a location get 79% more engagement.
- Show company culture.
- When you have an event that runs multiple days or hours, limit the amount you post. Add as much as you want to the story and save it to your highlights but keep posts on the event to one or two a day.

Other Channels

Stake your presence on channels and use services like Flickr and YouTube that make it easy to manage/host your content. But until the audience grows, do not worry about managing them as a social network. Instead, use them as tools to host content for your other social media channels. Keep an eye on relevant social networks that emerge that we might not have covered here—and remember to always go where your audience is.

What to do now:

- Use Flickr as a photo repository so you can easily access photos to repost on Instagram; do not worry about the social networking aspect. See [ABC National's Flickr account](#) for more.

- Use YouTube to host your videos.
- Once or twice a month, review like-minded organizations communications, blogs and articles and stay up to date on best practices for emerging networks.
- Learn more about your audience by asking them questions.
- Find out what other social networks they spend time on to make sure you have a presence there.
- Create and send surveys for feedback to small groups.
- Find out what kind of content users enjoy seeing, how often they visit different networks, etc.
- Whenever posting a video to YouTube, be sure to also cross-post it to Facebook and Twitter.

For more information on ABC's social media presence and to learn how to set up a vanity URL for Facebook, visit nationalconnections.org/communication.

For more information:

- Analytics sites, tracking sites and social media infrastructure are constantly being developed. A great resource for up-to-date information on social media developments and analysis tools is the PR Daily Newsfeed email. Sign up for their free newsletter here: prdaily.com/Main/Home.
- Also remember to incorporate “writing for the web” best practices in all of your social media outreach efforts. Refer to page 27 for dos and don'ts of web writing.
- Other questions can be directed to Rebecca Gale at gale@abc.org.

Photography

Photographs provide an excellent opportunity to build your chapter's public image and help shape your members' and your community's perception of the construction industry and craft professionals.

Photos provide an inviting and striking dynamic for your social media, publications, website, brochures, annual reports and other communications. Always make sure your lens is clean, your battery is charged and you have plenty of memory.

Please note: Only use photos online that you've taken yourself, own the copyrights for or purchased through an image platform such as Shutterstock, or use photos from [ABC National's Flickr account](#).

The following are tips to improve your photography skills.

Do

DO: Make sure the photographs you use are of a merit shop construction site that has not had any injuries, accidents or fatalities.

DO: Take at least six or seven shots to get the right one. Several elements can ruin your shot (blinking subjects, poor focus, incorrect light). Always take extra shots to ensure you have the one you want. Digital cameras make this easy. Take as many shots as you can and delete the worst ones later.

DO: Fill the frame. Always move as close to your subjects as possible. It is always better not to have to use the zoom. Do not lose your subject in the background. And remember, a flash only illuminates subjects within 8 to 10 feet.

DO: Put people up close and landmarks further away. If you are going to have people in the shot, be sure their faces can be seen.

DO: Think about your light. Try to use natural light as much as possible. Most digital cameras have internal light meters and exposure bias readings. Learn how to use them to get the correct exposure.

DO: Compose your shots in thirds. Once you are technically proficient with the camera, push yourself to think like a pro. Your shots should be balanced and show depth; think about the elements in your foreground and background

and how they do or do not work together. Sometimes the goal of the photo will dictate its composition, such as "grip-and-grin" photos at award ceremonies. But do not be afraid to be creative and try new ideas.

DO: Make sure your subjects look presentable (shirts tucked in, ties straightened) and there are no miscellaneous items, such as drinks or golf clubs, in the frame. Hands out of pockets, arms to the sides, no cigarettes or cocktails in photos.

DO: Double check to see that there are no safety violations of any type. Have your safety director on site for any public events where the media, lawmaker staff or others may be shooting b-roll or taking photos. If they are in a vehicle, make sure their seatbelts are on, etc. View ABC's safety guidelines checklist here: brandcenter.abc.org/SafetyGuidelines.

DO: Take different angles of group shots.

DO: Get action shots. They are much more interesting than a line of people looking into the lens.

DO: Get close-ups. Show what that craft professional is doing with the tools and materials. Zoom in on the intricate designs.

DO: Shoot video, too, even if it is on your phone. It is great for websites and social media.

Don't

DON'T: Worry about not having a fancy camera. The best camera is the one in your hands. While it is nice to have a high-quality camera—Single Lens Reflex (SLR or DSLR) with a slave (detachable) flash—most smartphones have high-quality cameras fully capable of taking web-worthy photos. Consider taking an introductory photography class if you need help.

DON'T: Forget to check your camera's default resolution settings. It is easier to make high-resolution photos smaller than to make a low-resolution photo larger.

DON'T: Be afraid to carry your camera and use it often. Get in the habit of thinking about potential photo opportunities, whether at a planned event, an organized shoot or just an interesting location.

DON'T: Publish or share any safety violations of any type. Your supporters will not notice—but your foes will. View ABC's safety guidelines checklist here: brandcenter.abc.org/SafetyGuidelines.

DON'T: Use images of construction/craft professionals that are union construction sites.

Advertising

Advertising is an effective tool for delivering information directly to targeted audiences. Unlike earned media, in which a reporter decides what information is included in a story, advertising allows you to carefully craft and control your message, maximizing impact.

Typically, print ads can be purchased in either black and white, two-color, four-color or all color. You can purchase 1/4-page, 1/2-page or full-page ads in a variety of styles. Additional ad size options are often available. Costs are relative to circulation, audience, size and number of colors in the ad, as well as the frequency with which you want to run the ad. If you are unsure about how to create and place your ad, you may want to consider retaining a public relations firm or ABC's marketing team to assist in the development of your ad campaign.

Online advertising is another way to distribute your message. Consider advertising in online newsletters and on websites your target audience subscribes to or visits. Online advertising is often less expensive than print advertising.

When developing your advertising campaign, keep these guiding principles in mind:

- Choose media outlets that reach your target audiences. Ask each respective media outlet for specific information about its audience composition and reach. In regard to radio and television, make sure you receive information on reach for specific programs. For example, programs during drive-time radio will reach more listeners than midday programming.
- Think creatively. Although daily newspapers may have the most reach, a targeted business or trade publication may provide better access to a target audience.
- Repetition=recall. An ad buy must run during a period of several weeks or months to affect awareness of the target audience. One full-page ad in a newspaper will not affect the target audience. However, 1/4-page newspaper ads placed in the same location (e.g., the opinion editorial section) over eight weeks should begin to make an impact on the target audience.

- Be imaginative with the buy. Do not limit yourself—explore radio, billboards and transit advertising. If the issue you are seeking to address involves a local school, buy ads in the school paper or buy a billboard that is directly across from the school or school board building.

When planning your advertising buy, first develop an advertising budget. Buying time on radio or television or buying space in newspapers is expensive. An effective advertising buy delivers maximum exposure to the target audiences at the most reasonable cost. When doing issue advertising, explore the possibility of sharing ad costs with other local organizations that share ABC's perspective.

The ad buy will determine how and when the advertising campaign reaches the target audiences. Although many media outlets may exist within your local market, we recommend beginning by focusing on these:

- Business/trade publications: Business weeklies, the business section of the daily newspaper and radio programs that focus on local business. Also, local and regional construction trade publications provide a very focused industry audience.
- Local (or statewide) newspapers: Concentrating on the business or metro sections.
- Billboards: Now that many billboards are digital, it's a great way to target potential members or craft students while they commute with multiple messages, not just one.
- Radio: Target stations with opinion leader audiences. Drive-time radio programming on AM stations that feature all-news or talk formats; at-work programming on FM stations with high office or penetration rates; or business or public affairs programming.

Public Speaking

Speaking to a community audience is an excellent way to communicate ideas to encourage action. The good news is that anyone can give speeches that inspire action. Be sure to post photos and quotes on your social media and website. A short video will get attention as well.

Effective speaking is an art to be honed throughout life, but there are fundamentals to a good speech:

- **Know your audience—and focus on their needs.** What are your listeners' passions, fears, interests and concerns? If you understand your audience, connect with their core beliefs and address what they are thinking, they often will agree with you and will explore new ideas or allow you to spur them into action. If you are talking, but they have tuned you out, it is a waste of everyone's time. "This evening you'll hear four ways that the proposed legislation will affect our community so that you can vote in the way that best serves you and your business." At the end of your speech, remind the audience how they can use what they just heard. "Now that you have an understanding of the ramifications of this legislation, you'll be able to make a good decision about what's best for your organization." When they know how they can use it, they will find the presentation worth their time and attention.
- **Define your message.** What two or three key points do you want your audience to remember? Avoid rambling through a stream of consciousness and instead communicate clear, concise and memorable action items.
- **Know your goal(s).** Before you speak, decide what you want your listeners to do after hearing your speech. Do you want them to email their senator? Hire a merit shop company? Sign up as a member? Attend a program? Be inspired? Vote? Be sure your speech calls for specific action(s) on their part.
- **Start strong.** Find a way to immediately grab your audience's attention. Tell a relevant story. Share an alarming fact. Ask an introspective question.
- **Establish rapport.** The most effective speakers view public speaking as a one-on-one conversation with each member of the audience. This creates rapport. Great speakers do not perform, they connect and inspire. They have a powerful conversation instead of reciting text.
- **Be repetitive.** At the outset, tell an audience what they will gain from the presentation. At the end, remind them what they gained. Identify three key words you want them to walk away with, then sprinkle those words throughout the presentation. We remember through repetition.
- **Believe in your message.** If you do not care, do not expect your audience to care.
- **Prepare.** Use statistics and other data sparingly but remember that information can motivate action. This requires research on your part. Great speakers spend far more time preparing for a speech than they spend giving the speech.
- **Keep it short and succinct.** Attention spans are short, so do not be long-winded. Focus and be succinct. The world's greatest speeches have been both concise and powerful.
- **Be personal.** It is best if you relate to your audience. Talk to them—do not read to them. Remember that a good speech is a conversation between the speaker and the listener.
- **Be assertive.** The most compelling editorials in a newspaper have a strong opinion and defend it well. The same holds true for speeches. Do not beat around the bush. Speak with purpose and convince your listeners of your premise. Use action words.
- **Use memorable anecdotes.** Often the best illustrations come from personal experience. Stories that your audience can relate to are often a great device for leaving a memorable impression. Humor can work but be careful; there are many pitfalls in telling jokes.

Practice, practice, practice!

Want help putting together a presentation or practicing the one you're about to give? Reach out to Erika Walter at ewalter@abc.org or Laurie Richards at laurie@laurierichards.com.

Toastmasters is a great way to always be upgrading your public speaking skills. Public speaking courses can also help.

Branding

The purpose of branding is to distinguish an organization's programs, products and services from those of other organizations and competitors. As ABC has risen to prominence as a national-level player in the construction industry, it has become increasingly important for the association to present itself to members and the general public in a strong, professional, clear and consistent way.

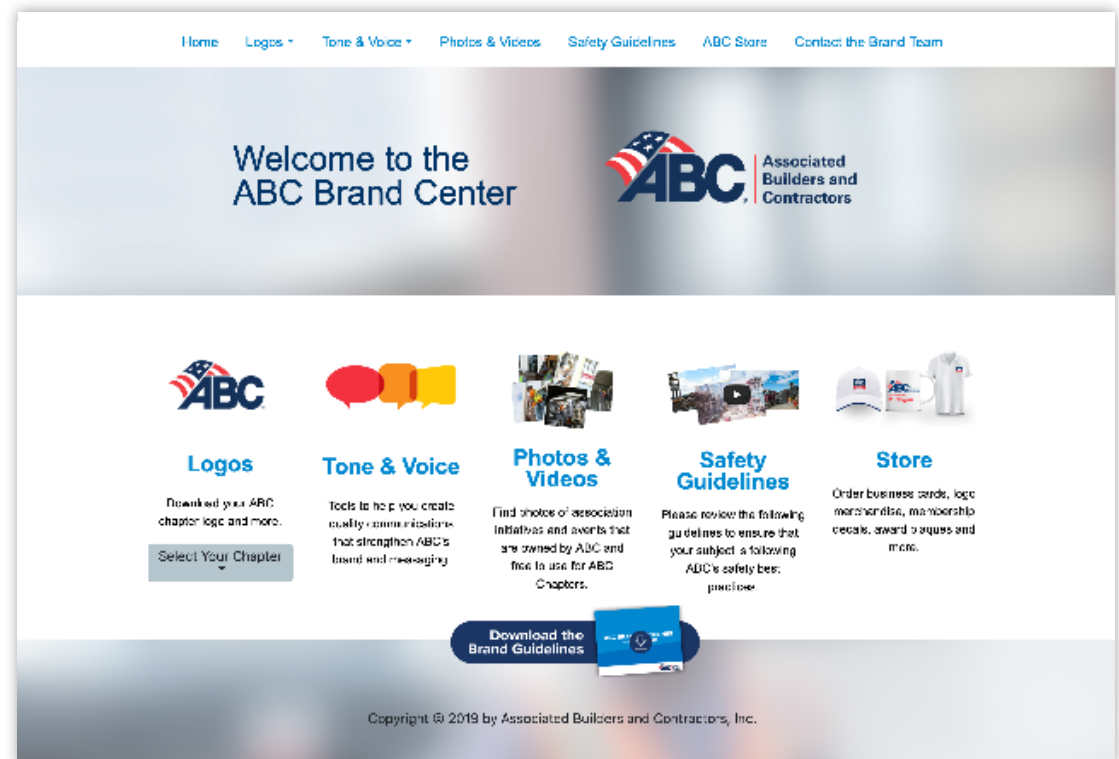
In 2019, ABC unveiled new brand guidelines and a branding website to implement a completely integrated approach to the overall ABC brand.

The ABC Brand Guidelines establish a set of rules and standards for how we communicate and present ourselves. For the brand identity to be successful, it must be used consistently across the organization. These guidelines serve as a central resource for using brand language and visuals consistently so we can amplify ABC's message and maximize the impact of the association's work. The brand guidelines also provide flexibility to address specific audiences, convey powerful messages and achieve timely objectives as needed.

On the brand center website, chapters can access ABC, chapter and program logos; an overview of the association's tone and voice with approved language for its programs, services and priorities; and safety-approved photos and videos.

If you have any questions for the ABC brand team or would like to request a new logo be created, reach out at [brandcenter.abc.org/contact](https://www.abc.org/contact).

ABC has also set up an online store for chapters and members to order ABC-branded merchandise, including awards and certificates, print collateral, promotional items and signage.



Community Outreach

Each year, ABC chapters and members engage in activities that strengthen their communities by serving the needs of others. When your chapter organizes or participates in a community outreach event, it's important to send out a news release to the media.

When preparing a news release, remember to include information such as the date, time and location of the event; how many volunteers are participating; the amount of money or time donated; and what charity or organization is benefiting from this event and how it affects your community.

Once the news release has been sent, the next step is to post it on your website. If there is a specific place to feature community service activities, post the release in that section. If no such location exists, place the release in the news section of your site.

Your website is also a great place to publicize your event before and after it takes place. If possible, dedicate a portion of your website to the community outreach activities of your chapter and your member companies. You can quickly and easily add an ABC Cares page to your website and use it as a place to locate information about your community service efforts.

After completing any community outreach activities, be sure to notify ABC about your event by emailing the ABC Public Affairs or Chapter Services teams.

- Sandy Lynch, Vice President, Public Affairs and Member Services, lynch@abc.org
- Donna Reichle, Senior Director of Public Affairs, reichle@abc.org
- Francis Lowe, Director of Digital Communications, lowe@abc.org
- Erika Walter, Director of Media Relations, ewalter@abc.org
- Grace Austin, Senior Writer/Editor, austin@abc.org
- Rebecca Gale, Communications Manager, gale@abc.org
- Doug Curtis, Vice President, Chapter Services, curtis@abc.org
- Danielle Woodall, Director of Membership, Communications and Resources, woodall@abc.org