



➔ FACTSHEET 9

Marketing and Communications



As soon as you start your gynaecological cancer support and advocacy group there will be a need to present the group to the outside world and communicate clearly. Marketing, branding and communications are words we hear a lot, but despite their importance, there can be confusion on what they actually mean. Early in the process you may have very limited resources so taking time to plan thoroughly and starting small in this area is a sensible approach.

Marketing

Marketing is the process of understanding and communicating with your audiences so that you achieve any objectives that you have set in your three-year action plan (Factsheet 4). These audiences could include women with gynaecological cancer and their families, health professionals and researchers, government agencies and policy makers, and other support groups.

Branding

The marketing process starts with branding. Branding is an important part of developing a group and is closely related to the activities of finalising your remit and preparing a mission statement as described in Factsheets 3 and 4.

Branding is an attempt to distill and express the essential value of the group – for example, this is who we are and this is what we do. Usually your ‘brand’ will stay the same over time whereas there may be many ways of communicating to your different audiences.

Large companies can spend huge amounts of time and money in developing and sustaining their ‘brand’, but even with the smallest start-up group it is well worth investing time into thinking who you are and what you want to achieve. This is always a wise investment before you spend money on publicity, websites and brochures.

Your brand needs to be strong and clear in a market where vast numbers of individuals and organisations are clamouring for attention, whether on the web, broadcast media or print. This is particularly important in an area which has been poorly represented till now despite carrying out vital support and advocacy for many women with gynaecological cancers.

Branding is a marketing strategy that involves creating a differentiated name and image often using a logo or tagline, in order to establish a presence with your target groups and sponsors, sponsors and to attract and keep volunteers.

It's good to ask yourself some questions as you consider your new group's 'brand'.

- Who are you and who do you want to represent?
- What do you want to achieve with your group?
- Who are you mainly trying to communicate with?
- What is the group's value proposition? Is it distinctive from other groups? How relevant is it to the groups represented?
- When people think about my group, what are the feelings and associations I want them to have?
- What benefits will I provide to my target group? Including the emotional benefits that only you can deliver.
- How should volunteers and sponsors feel about your group, its works and achievements?
- What brand personality should your group have? i.e. which personality traits within your group should your target groups identify with?

This process can take place alongside the actions in Factsheet 4. However, all these questions need to be considered alongside the realities of your own capacity and resources – being realistic about short- and long-term goals is very important if you want your group to be sustainable.

When you are confident you have agreed your mission statement (see Factsheet 3) and brand identity you can start to develop core items of the brand which could include the name of your group, visuals, logos, straplines, signs, attitudes and accepted behaviour of the group. All these need to flow from the agreed purpose and vision of the group – your brand.

Further thoughts on these items include:



In developing a name it is worth considering whether it is distinctive, relevant, memorable, and flexible enough to encompass growth. It could be useful to develop a short list of possible names and test these with key audiences before you launch the group.



A logo is only the symbol of your brand, not the brand itself. It can really be worth the investment of getting a professional designer to produce ideas for logos. A clean, simple and good quality logo is really invaluable in helping to communicate your vision. Employing a professional graphic artist may be well worth the investment as a good logo should last at least 10 years.



Remember that design can be an extremely subjective thing, but it is really helpful if someone on your committee has some design, marketing or public relations experience.

Communications

The marketing process continues as you begin to express the values of your brand to the audiences you want to connect with a range of different communications that could include a website, social media and printed materials.

Consistency in all your communications is key so your audiences quickly learn to spot you among all the other competing voices. It is also good to agree a mechanism which allows you to continually review all the communications that you produce to ensure the right messages are hitting the right audiences. It will be valuable to have someone on your committee taking responsibility for all the different ways you communicate to your various audiences to ensure consistency and quality.

As you begin to connect with other groups you may find valuable links and expertise that can help you with your communications. ENGAGE can be a useful source of information as you look at developing a communication strategy – get in touch at esgo.engage@gmail.com.

Factsheet 12 is a valuable Media Toolkit to help groups work effectively with the media.

http://engage.esgo.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/esgo_engage-mediakit_trainingguide_final_pbp.pdf

The toolkit includes how to prepare a media strategy, working with the print and broadcast media, how to write various documents such as press releases, media backgrounders and letters and how to run press conferences.

Online communications

Many advocacy groups are started online (see Factsheet 3) and this provides a large potential audience with relatively low expenditure. Websites and social media allow like-minded people from across the world to come together for information and support.

A website is often the first resource for your group. A professionally designed web site can be a great asset, but costs can be high. Simple, free 'build your own' websites can be very useful in the early stages of developing your group. In planning a website you need to ensure that someone in your group is prepared and able to keep it up to date and relevant – nothing is more off putting than a home page with old events listed.

A basic website could include:

- A basic introduction to your group and its ethos and the value your group brings to your community.
- Clinical information on the various cancers
- Links to events and activities
- Links to patient stories
- Information on the management committee/trustees
- Details of upcoming activities (any support group meetings, fundraising efforts etc.)
- Methods of donating money
- Useful links for further information
- News items and links to other media stories
- Contact details so people can ask questions

Social media including Facebook and Twitter can also be very helpful in promoting your group and keeping in touch with national and international developments. Simple YouTube videos of patients' and carers' stories, and clips from health professionals can also be very effective.

The Media Toolkit and Factsheet 3 include some useful tips on how to optimise your use of social media and websites. There are also many useful resources online that help users to use social media safely and effectively.

Printed materials

Sometimes printed materials may be an appropriate way of telling your story. Again it is worth spending the time to identify what you need to communicate and how you can best do that. It may be that a simple black and white A5 leaflet does the job you need more effectively, and a lot cheaper, than a glossy colour brochure.

As mentioned before, materials should only be developed when resources are available. Where possible, getting voluntary help from professionals in design, marketing and printing is invaluable.

