

Extra! Extra! Read All About It!

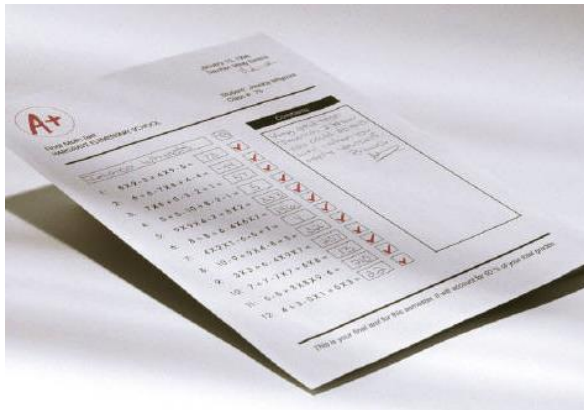
by [Catherine Dizon](#)

How do you package and disseminate the data that you collect? Do you write about it in a letter that you put in a bottle and throw out to sea? Do you tie two cups together with a string and tell your story to each neighbor? Or maybe you choreograph an interpretive dance that you perform to sold-out stadiums? Though not impossible, we doubt that this is how you share information with stakeholders. So we decided to compile some helpful tips and examples from the field to boost your creativity in reporting strategies.



Report Card

One impactful way to use data you've collected is to create report cards. This is a simple method for disseminating results back to those who provided information to you. For example, data collected from store observations can be used to create a rating system. Perhaps a tobacco retailer that follows all local and state laws will receive an "A," "Pass," or "3-Star" rating, while a non-compliant tobacco retailer would receive an "F," "Fail," or a "1-Star" rating because the STAKE Act sign is missing or the store clerk sold tobacco to a minor.



Press Release

A press release is a very short, yet informative writing format that aims to hook and persuade the reader into investigating the matter further. Your goal is to convince your audience that all of the work you've been doing deserves their attention and action.

Typically, a press release includes a catchy headline, a provocative quote or two, a sneak peek at the data and its significance to the reader, and a call to action. The headline serves to quickly attract your reader to continue reading your press release. A juicy quote can make the issue real and personal by giving it a "face" or voice. Inclusion of a few key findings from your data establishes the basis of your message and expertise in the matter. And lastly, your press release should have an answer to the question, "So what?" Maybe the answer is that you want your readers to be aware of the scope of a problem. Maybe you want them to support a policy you are promoting. Or perhaps you want readers to change their behavior. Whatever the answer, clearly communicate what you want readers to do and provide action steps.

Here's a fun blog post on what goes into a good press release.
<http://younglandis.wordpress.com/2011/03/03/writing-a-press-release-death-by-six-shooter/>.



Letter to the Editor or Social Media

Another way to cast your nets to general audiences is through letters to the editor. Respond to a tobacco-related article you saw or comment on a proposed policy in your community. Your letter could appear in the newspaper to garner attention and interest in your program's work. You could even contribute information by commenting on blogs or other online discussion boards. You might post some statistics, facts, or interesting articles on your organization's Facebook or Twitter account, or create public service announcements and informational videos to post to YouTube. The important thing is that your message is delivered to your audience in an approachable way.

PowerPoint Presentation

Another common reporting strategy is to create a PowerPoint presentation. But please, don't let all your hard work drown in a text-heavy slide! Yes, it takes a lot more skill to create a presentation that conveys your message in an eye-catching and memorable way, but the payoff is an audience that actually remembers an idea you share. I'm in awe of TED talk presenters. They're able to educate and entertain all in just 10 minutes! (Technology, Entertainment and Design – TED – hosts annual conferences to promote the world's best ideas through short innovative presentations.) Here's one talk that I recommend watching: http://www.ted.com/talks/chris_jordan_pictures_some_shocking_stats.html. It shows an elegantly simple way of presenting data with images. Watch for the creative and persuasive way the speaker talks about tobacco deaths and teen smoking rates. Consider how you would want to listen to a presentation and then design your talk that way.


“Feel these issues because
they’ll matter more”
– Chris Jordan

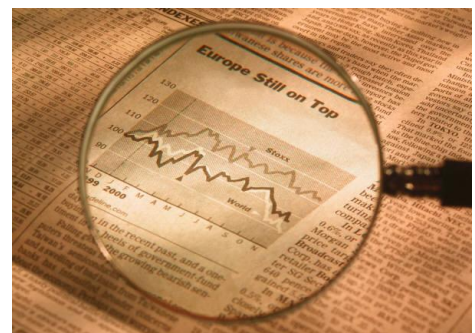
Jurisdiction-Specific Reports

Go beyond the Final or Brief Evaluation Report that you submit to CTCP which summarizes all of your work on a particular objective. Consider writing reports customized for individual jurisdictions. You've already done the work when you wrote the FER or BER, now just edit that report so that all the information pertains to a specific jurisdiction. Frame the report so that it catches the attention of the decision makers in that jurisdiction. This is just one example of how you can repackage work you've already done and present it in a useful way. You could also generate graphs and talking points for coalition members to promote in the communities they represent. Community meetings are a great way to network and share data.

Some last notes about sharing data: Regardless of your dissemination strategy, always keep your intended audience(s) in mind. Make it easy for the reader to quickly find what's important in your message. Adjust the reading level, format, content, and outlets for your information to those end-users.

You've done the hard work of collecting data and implementing your strategies. Now it's time to squeeze every bit of value from what you've produced by sharing it with those in your community who can transform your information into action.

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Photos by: Microsoft