Becoming a Stronger Advocate: How to Tell Your Story

Community Oncology Alliance’s 2017 Community Oncology Conference

April 28, 2017
THE APPEAL OF BEING YOU
Who Has More Political Power?

Professional Lobbyists  
Patient Advocates
Sources of Political Power

- Direct political and policy experience
- Relationships and connections
- Networking
- Understanding the ways of Washington, D.C. (or a state capital)
You’re More Powerful Than You Might Think

You are a constituent
- Someone represents you at every level of government.
- Their electoral chances depend on you.

You have a story to tell
- Real people have compelling experiences and stories only they can tell.
- Policymakers want to hear from you.
- Policy is nothing without the human element.
Case Study: The Power of Real People

Policy goal

Raise awareness about an improved entry process for travelers to the United States; encourage people to contact their members of Congress in support of reform.

Advocacy results

Paid posts targeted to where people would be most receptive. The campaign reached over 1 million people and resulted in 24,000 interactions, 5,360 likes and nearly 1,000 new fans. The campaign also attracted the attention of CNN, USA Today and the Washington Post.
Advantages of Being an Advocate

COMMUNITY

ACTION

RESULTS
SHARING YOUR STORY WITH POLICYMAKERS
Step 1: Understand What’s Involved

• **An emotional investment.** You’ll need to be strong enough emotionally to be able to recount your experience and explain why it matters.

• **A physical investment.** You’ll need to be strong enough physically to get around if more than one or two meetings occur on the same day.
Step 2: Prepare for Your Meeting

Key Questions to Ask and Answer

• With whom are you meeting?
• What is this person’s background and role?
• How, if at all, are you connected to this person/office? (Are you a constituent?)
• What do you want to accomplish?
• Are you prepared to answer questions?
• Do you have materials?
Step 3: Understand Your Power

• Personal experiences = political power, they give credibility or authority to speak out on various issues.
• You are the only person who possesses your unique experience; no one else is better qualified to share your story.
• When policymakers need to make decisions on issues, real people just like you often make the difference.

1986 State of the Union
2011 State of the Union
Step 4: Develop Your Talking Points

Talking points

- Your story
- Importance of CO
Step 5: Practice Telling Your Story

Target length: 4 to 7 minutes
How to Tell an Effective Story

1. Be yourself, and speak from the heart
2. Emotion is good, but keep it controlled
3. Express your strong support for CO given your personal experience
4. Stick to your talking points: diagnosis, treatment, outcome(s)
5. Convey that millions of others have similar stories to share
Your Meeting: Know Before You Go

- **Venue(s):** Know all office locations and contact info with you
- **Attire:** Business professional
- **Time:** 15 to 20 minutes or less
- **Setting:** Unpredictable (e.g. office lobby; other cramped or noisy quarters)
- **Staff:** Varies by office; don’t be surprised by age
- **Questions:** Come prepared; know how to address
Your Meeting: Run of Show

• Arrive on time, but be prepared to wait:
  • Policymaker introduces himself/herself
  • You introduce yourself
  • Policymaker begins the meeting
  • You explain why you are there and tell your story (4-7 minutes)

• Answer questions (if asked) or indicate you will get back to them with answers

• Provide leave-behind materials and contact information
LEVERAGING THE MEDIA FOR ADVOCACY
The Media’s Role in Advocacy

Members of the 113th Congress
Policymakers Also Leverage Media

- Call attention to or educate on various issues
- Generate support or opposition to various policies
Common Advocacy Vehicles

1. Letter to the editor
2. Opinion - editorial
3. Reporter interview
4. Social media
Letter to the Editor Tips

Length matters
- 250 words or less

When you submit matters
- ASAP, but 5 days or less is advisable

What you say matters
- “Conflict” is necessary

Who you are matters
- Being an expert helps

How you submit matters
- Exclusivity is typically required; email works best; consult submission guidelines
Recent Printed Letter to the Editor


Mischaracterization is a common political tactic and not fair. Howard says Sen. Collins “will sacrifice the long-term welfare of the nation for the short-term, partisan benefit of the Republican Party” – what a bold, false accusation.

Susan Collins cares very much for our country. She supported a Senate confirmation hearing for Merrick Garland; she sided with Democrats in calling for a fair review for Garland; she sided with Democrats in opposition to a proposed travel ban; she has parted ways with conservative Republicans on gun issues, and she has voted in support of a federal law change that would expand federal background checks for gun purchases.

Keep up the good work, Sen. Collins.

David Ryder
Portland
Opinion – Editorial Tips

Length matters
• Typically 450 to 650 words (some national publications permit up to 1,200 words)

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Reporter Interview Tips

Research the reporter

Identify key points and inject them into your conversation (assume you will not know interview questions in advance)

It’s OK to say you don’t know, but follow up promptly
Social Media Tips

- Keep it short
- Attribution matters
- Add relevant hashtags
- Grab attention
- Give context
- Use a visual

- Make it personal
- Share links/articles
- Add relevant hashtags
- Tag friends/other advocates

- Get permission
- Keep audience in mind
- Capture steady/clear footage
QUESTIONS?

THANK YOU!

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