

# PR and Marketing 101: Back to Basics

## Grassroots Marketing Overview

### What is it?

Often called “word of mouth,” grassroots marketing is a strategy that utilizes or creates community networks of brand enthusiasts to market your product, idea, or cause.

### Who uses it?

Grassroots marketing is widely used by all segments of the economy as well as political and cause-oriented organizations, scout groups, sports teams, musicians, just about everyone, even museums.

### Why use it?

- it can be a low cost way to be heard above the advertising frenzy
- your message is delivered by credible voices, often in unexpected ways
- it creates buzz
- it can be effective in reaching audiences that do not usually respond to traditional marketing
- it builds brand loyalty

### How?

- techniques are virtually endless and include everything from posting flyers, coffee chats, and logo merchandise to blog posts, viral videos, and tweets
- creativity counts but like all marketing, you need a strategy
- be focused - identify a specific geographic/demographic group and build your campaign specifically for them
- build some kind of measurement into your plan in the beginning and document your results as you go forward
- don't be afraid to let your hair down – have fun; successful grassroots campaigns have an element of fun and surprise

### Examples

Here are but a few ways that museums have used grassroots marketing

#### **Poe Mania: From Goth to Geezer – Harry Ransom Center at The University of Texas at Austin**

Recognizing that Edgar Allan Poe could resonate with goth to geezer audiences, the Ransom Center's communication and marketing teams planned and executed a promotional campaign to

launch the week before the opening of its exhibition *From Out that Shadow: The Life and Legacy of Edgar Allan Poe*. Holding one of the most extensive Poe collections, the Ransom Center had the opportunity to share the author's manuscripts, books, art and personal effects, with many being displayed for the first time.

With Poe being perhaps the most widely read American author of the nineteenth century, the potential audience was diverse in age and also extended beyond those that would be able to visit the exhibition in-person.

Dubbed "Poe Mania," the campaign contributed to enthusiasm, word of mouth, and media coverage. Limited to a week's time, Poe Mania divulged daily online content celebrating Poe with a hyperlink to each day's reveal. The campaign reached beyond those who would be able to visit the exhibition in person by unveiling its digital collection of 4,000 Poe-related images, and by inviting people to submit their parodies or decode cryptographs.

Poe Mania effectively engaged and energized new audiences, allowed two-way communication, and contributed to the Poe exhibition's reach and exposure. Combining outreach efforts to press and social media, the Ransom Center's Poe Mania campaign achieved and contributed to increasing the first week's attendance by more than 50%, increasing Facebook fans by 39%, and contributing to more than 40,000 pageviews of Poe-related web content.

A case study of Poe Mania can be found at <http://budurl.com/poemania>.

### **Human Billboards – The Clark**

Summer tourists and second home owners flood the rural Berkshires of western Massachusetts each year, bolstering the area's population for three months. To thrive, Berkshire-based organizations have to tap into this influx of culture seekers who are often overloaded with information and advertising messages. To be heard above the din, the Clark chose to employ a grassroots strategy that would complement its existing marketing plan and raise visibility for the *Picasso Looks at Degas* exhibition in a way that was based on trusted advice from "locals."

For this project, the Clark partnered with two high-end retail businesses (a grocery co-op and a wine shop) with multiple locations in the geographic target area of the campaign, who are very customer service oriented (making them much loved and trusted), and who do a great deal of business with visitors to the region. The "billboards" were actually store staff who wore bright yellow shirts printed with "Picasso Looks at Degas. Only this summer, only at the Clark." Staff wore the shirts on a regular basis and often held "Clark outs" during which everyone working in the stores donned their yellow shirt. In addition to the shirts, a variety of collateral material – banners, rack cards, posters – was visible in each of the partner locations.

To strengthen the partnership the Clark provided free passes to the "billboards" and encouraged them to visit the exhibition. Press materials, catalogues, and a Q & A sheet were also provided so partners could brush up on the show and be knowledgeable ambassadors. In-store giveaways with Picasso SWAG bags, facebook posts, and a website presence for our partners provided added value and incentive for the stores. The partners also created their own events related to the exhibition, including a Spanish wine tasting and Spanish cooking demonstration, and promoted them to their customers via facebook and emails.

*Picasso Looks at Degas* was the Clark's second best attended exhibition with 90% of visitors coming from outside the region. While the human billboards cannot explain the entirety of our success, the feedback we received from our partners and visitors indicates that the shirts provided a personal reinforcement of our other marketing and public relations activities.

***VIVO! Days of the Dead 2010 – Oakland Museum of California***  
**Marketing and Communications Plan**

Exhibition: October 6 – December 5

Community Celebration: Saturday, October 23

**Background:**

The Oakland Museum of California has presented the *Days of the Dead* exhibition and community celebration for the past 17 years. Originally conceived by members of the Oakland community, this annual exhibition brings in over 20,000 people each year. The community celebration, which is held in the OMCA gardens, attracts over 5,000 visitors and is a marquee community event for OMCA.

**Goal:**

Attract our target audience of East Bay Families to OMCA to the *VIVO! Days of the Dead* exhibition, and the Community Celebration. Inform current audiences of the changes to our admission fees for the Community Celebration and welcome them to the new OMCA.

**Target Audiences:**

Primary Audience: East Bay Families

Secondary Audiences: Current Attendees

**Grass Roots Strategies:**

The OMCA Advisory Councils (Latino, Days of the Dead, African American, and Asian-Pacific) will help communicate information about this year's exhibition and activities to the returning Days of the Dead audiences from past celebrations and past outreach efforts. Utilizing "word-of-mouth" and printed collateral created especially for this audience (English and Spanish), the Advisory Councils will inform current attendees of the change in the admission fee (previously free) and encourage these audiences to come to experience all the facets of the new museum.

**Tactics:**

The OMCA marketing team will work directly with organizations and businesses to utilize their e-mail and online calendar listings, and blogs. Additionally, efforts will be made to connect with family, adult, and neighborhood groups, and activity groups.

- Contacting existing meetup/activity groups – multi-cultural
- Listing on social and cultural Bay Area Calendars, targeting families

**Advertising:**

Low cost advertising will be purchased in key local and neighborhood-oriented print publications in the East Bay. Advertising will be geared towards attracting East Bay Families and will be done in English and Spanish.

**Communication:**

Talking points were provided to the Advisory Councils. A news release was sent to the OMCA media list and calendar editors, highlighting community celebration and exhibition and communicating the new admission fee. Follow up will include pitching to neighborhood media and scheduling interviews as requested.

- Initial news release to OMCA media list
- Spanish language release to Hispanic and Latino media list

- Stories pitched to general media, and community media outlets, as well as secured spots in Oakland Magazine, Diablo Magazine, and El Mundo.
- Exhibition opening, and Saturday, October 23 celebration listed on fullcalendar.com (400 + community listings)

**Online:**

- Digital signage
- E News – starting
- E flyers to participants

**Social Media:**

OMCA Marketing team working with the Education staff will document and share the *Vivo: Days of the Dead* installation process - photography. Quotes from artist and guest curator Jaime Cortez, and team will be released on OMCA Social Media/ museumca.org website.

- Photographs (Facebook, Flickr, Twitter)
- Mini Blogs (Facebook, Twitter)
- Video – if Education is able to provide, and are branded – YouTube
- Updates – Facebook, Twitter
- OMCA Facebook will serve as a public comment wall for the exhibition and community celebration
- Social engagement: Public is invited to bring a photograph of a deceased member to the museum for the community celebration/exhibition.

**Collateral:**

- Poster/brochure piece to Advisory Council – Bi lingual
- Advisory Councils to distribute
- Collateral quantity: 3,000

**Promotion:**

- Four free tickets will be given to five local neighborhood papers for giveaways
- Groupon.com sales for the community festival

**Onsite:**

- The exhibition will be added to the digital signage
- Education will work with Visitor Experience Manager to use Spanish speaking Ambassadors

**Total Cost for the 4-month campaign: \$6,000**