



The Essential Guide to Broadcast PSA Success

for nonprofits, professional associations &
government agencies with vital public interest
messages to share

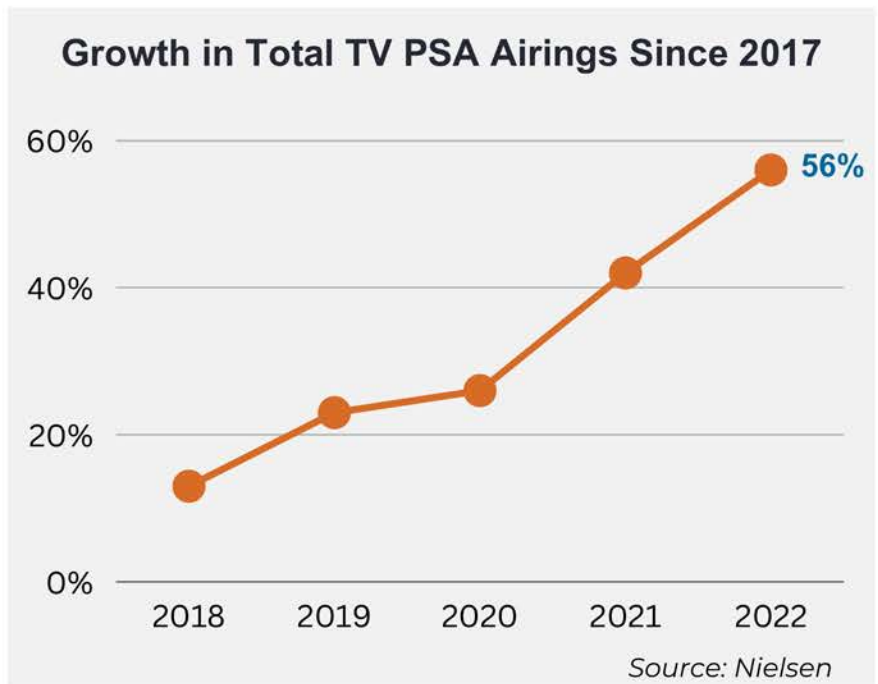


Executive Summary

Television stations are airing more PSAs than ever before. Last year, Nielsen Media reported that PSA airings were up 56% compared to just five years ago.

This burst in demand results from the growth in nonprofit use of TV PSAs.

Yet, many nonprofits are still missing out on this chance to connect with large audiences and share essential information. Some still need to learn more about how PSAs work and how organizations can benefit from them. Others simply aren't sure how to get started.



By reading this guide, you're taking the first step toward seizing a valuable opportunity.

Based on Nielsen data and decades of industry experience, we'll give you the inside look at why broadcast PSAs are essential for organizations that want to spread a public interest message and make lasting change in the process.

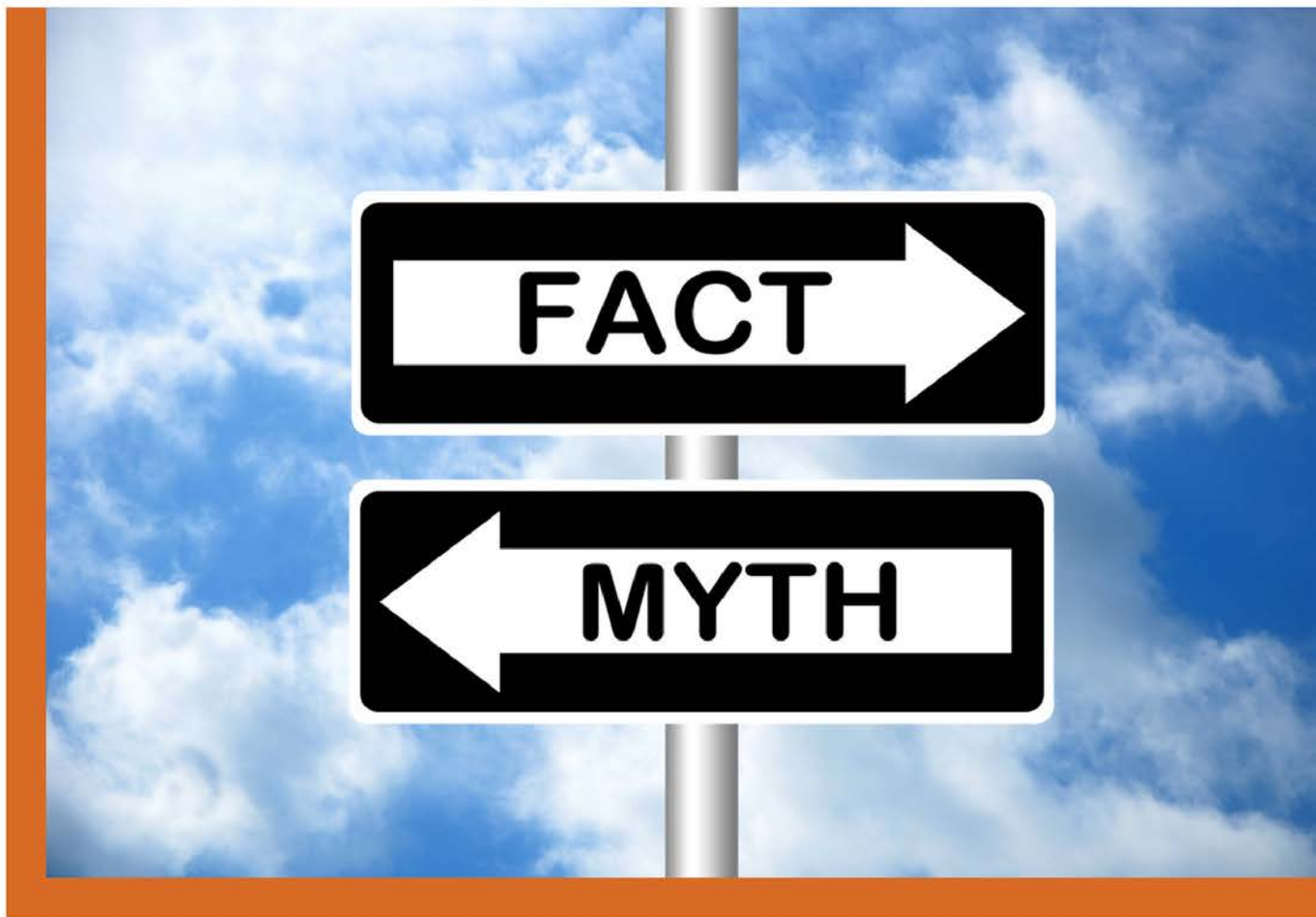
We will explore:

- Why PSAs are essential in the modern world of streaming and OTT media.
- Common myths that might be standing in the way of some nonprofits using PSAs.
- Distribution, tracking, results reporting, and why those metrics matter.
- What to do (and avoid!) to maximize the impact of your PSA.
- How to handle the trickier aspects of PSA creation and distribution.
- How to combine broadcast PSAs with Connected TV (CTV), digital, print, and out-of-home tactics.

The wide reach of broadcast television, combined with free, donated advertising space from stations and networks, makes PSAs a uniquely valuable tactic for nonprofit organizations, associations, and agencies to raise awareness of their missions and deliver their message to large audiences. It's time for more organizations to take advantage of this opportunity.

Part 1

Busting Common Myths About PSAs



Common Myths About PSA Distribution

Before we dive into the nitty-gritty of how PSAs work, let's address the elephant in the room. There are some persistent myths about PSAs that keep some organizations from investing in them. Here are four myths that need to be busted.

Myth #1 Digital advertising is the most cost-effective way to boost awareness

Many organizations think they can rely exclusively on digital advertising to get their message out. While digital advertising does offer advanced targeting options, you pay for each impression or click. That means the costs add up quickly, especially over a long campaign. Digital advertising is most valuable when it's used to target a specific, well-defined audience in coordination with a broader broadcast awareness campaign. By contrast, PSA media is always donated and free.



Myth #2 Broadcast stations are required to air PSAs

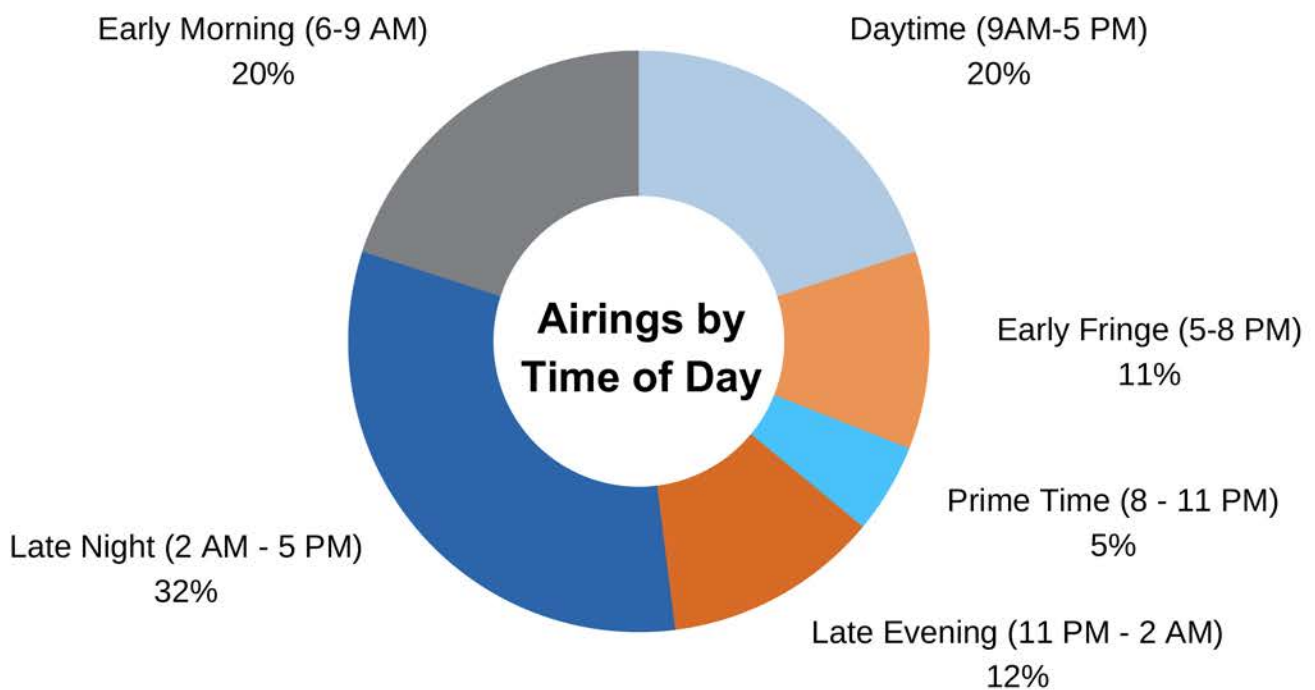
Though the FCC lifted that requirement decades ago, stations still air PSAs for three reasons. First, though stations can demonstrate to the FCC in many ways that they are meeting their licensing requirement to operate in the "public interest," running PSAs is still a way many stations chose to do this.

Second, it is important for stations to demonstrate to the communities and advertisers they serve that they are community-minded organizations.

And third, from a practical standpoint, PSAs help stations to fill unsold commercial ad space without hurting their ability to sell their full-price inventory. If you think about it, stations have a full broadcast day with many (many!) commercial breaks. With all this inventory, seven days a week, it's impossible to sell out every commercial slot. Therefore, PSAs are seamlessly inserted to fill up a commercial pod.

Myth #3 Broadcast PSAs only air in the wee hours of the morning

People often assume that PSAs mostly air late at night because that's when stations have the most unsold inventory. Not true. Based on our analysis of over 2.5 million airings from 2022, only about one-third of the airings (32%) occurred in the overnight hours, with a larger two-thirds (68%) of airings occurring during normal waking hours. In addition, 5% of airings occurred during prime time. That may not seem like a large percentage, but given the tens of thousands of airings, 5% is nothing to sneeze at.



Myth #4 Broadcast PSAs mostly air in smaller markets

This also is not true. According to the analysis mentioned earlier, 27% of airings occurred on networks, regional networks, or stations in the top 50 markets. Over 45% of airings were on networks or top 100 markets.

Part 2

Why and How Broadcast PSAs Work

3 PILLARS OF PSA SUCCESS



Why Broadcast PSAs Work

With more nonprofits and associations using digital media options to focus on key demographics and drive clicks, television and radio public service announcements (PSAs) may seem like more of an “old school” tactic. But broadcast PSAs are not only alive and well, they can help achieve broad awareness independently, or as a complement to a digital campaign.

Television and radio PSAs can:

- ✓ **Extend visibility**

Stations generally air a PSA for six to 12 months or longer. That’s strong visibility over a sustained period of time. This can augment a digital campaign, which is usually shorter in duration due to ad costs.
- ✓ **Drive broad awareness**

With stations across the country airing the PSA, an organization’s message can reach new ears. A year-long television campaign typically generates about 100 million impressions.
- ✓ **Get free placements**

Stations donate valuable advertising space when they air PSAs. A year-long campaign typically generates in excess of \$5 million in donated media, with some campaigns generating in excess of \$25 million. Nonprofit CFOs are required to record this as an in-kind contribution and report it on their audited CPA financial statements. As a result, a typical TV PSA campaign returns upwards of 150x more free advertising time than a nonprofit spends to distribute it.

Now that you know what PSAs can do, let’s get into the details of how PSAs are distributed, tracked, and reported.

The Three Pillars of PSA Success

The success of a broadcast PSA campaign is built on three pillars: Distribution, Tracking and Reporting. Let's take a closer look how they support your PSA campaigns.



PSA Distribution

Digital Delivery

Most stations no longer accept hard-copy video tapes or film reels. Digital delivery is now the preferred method. Most stations receive PSAs from Extreme Reach, a company that delivers the vast majority of paid commercial ads in the United States. Through Extreme Reach, a PSA Director is notified when a new campaign has been dropped into their cloud-based in-box. They can read campaign materials and easily preview the PSA. If they want it to run on their station, they simply notify the traffic department to access the Extreme Reach platform and the PSA is put into rotation.

PSA Libraries

Some stations also digitally download PSAs from resource centers. These PSA libraries allow a PSA Director to see what campaigns are available at any given time. This is especially valuable if they are looking for PSAs on a specific topic.



Connect360 developed PSA Connect, a library of all the PSAs we are currently distributing. Stations can browse the campaigns in our library, click to review campaign materials, preview, and then download. Other PSA libraries include the Ad Council's PSA Central and the National Association of Broadcasters Spot Center.

Tracking PSA Airings

TV PSA Airings Tracking

Stations that donate airtime rarely inform nonprofits that their PSA is being aired. To find the dates and times of airings, nonprofits rely on Nielsen's SIGMA monitoring service.



As a subscriber, Connect360 puts an electronic “watermark” on the PSA prior to distribution. This tracking device notifies Nielsen every time a PSA has aired. Nielsen collects this data and delivers it daily to Connect360.

The SIGMA Report Includes:

- station call letters
- market
- exact date of airing
- exact time of airing

All of that information is important to understand because it enables Connect360 to calculate how many viewers were exposed to your message.

Radio PSA Airings Tracking

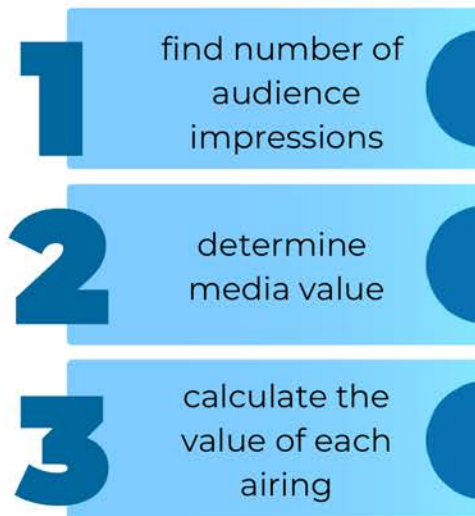


Nielsen Audio (formerly SoundScan) uses similar technology to monitor radio airings. While Nielsen can capture television airings across virtually every TV station in the country, radio has more limited capabilities. Nielsen only monitors about 1,700 of the nation's 15,000 stations.

For non-monitored radio stations, we have developed a self-reporting system. Through an exclusive reporting portal, we have made it possible for several hundred additional stations to provide us with their usage information.

Results Reporting

Each day, we import airing data into our proprietary database and run it through our system to properly value the air time. The first step is to determine how many people saw your PSA each time it aired. This is done by applying the Nielsen audience rating for the show the PSA aired in using the constantly updated viewership database we license from Nielsen.



Next, we take this audience impression number and determine its media value. Since stations don't make their rate cards public, we obtain pricing data from a marketing research company called SQAD which confidentially gathers actual price data from the nation's largest media buying services.

This information is only licensed to a limited number of analytical and media research companies. It tells what actual media buyers paid each month to air actual commercials.

By combining this information with our knowledge of where each individual spot aired and how many people viewed it, we are able to determine the value of each airing. We are also able to determine demographic information about the audience that was exposed to the spots.

This approach was developed to meet the requirements of the CPA community and its need to measure the value of gift-in-kind donations nonprofit organizations receive. It is in compliance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) because it relies on actual market sales prices for transactions that occurred in the same time period that the donated services were received.

Speaking of gift-in-kind donations...

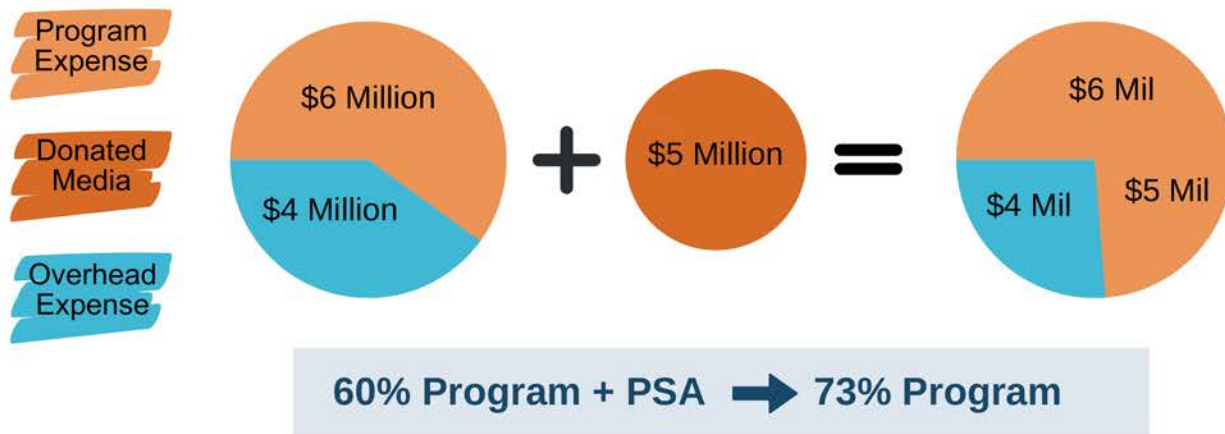


Gift-in-Kind – A Little-Known Secret

Public Service campaigns offer an interesting perk beyond awareness of the cause. They can actually help with a nonprofit's ratio of revenue and expenses, something that donors look at when choosing a charity to support.

How it Works: When a station airs a PSA, it donates to the nonprofit the value that it otherwise would have charged an advertiser. This donation is called a gift-in-kind donation, which means it's a contribution made in a form other than cash. At the end of a PSA campaign, this can end up being a very large donation to record!

PSA Campaigns Improve the Overhead-to-Programs Expense Ratio



Since donated advertising time is used (in most cases) to promote the mission of a nonprofit, it is considered to be a 100% program-related expense. That is an expense incurred to promote the mission of the organization rather than for overhead or fundraising.

As a 100% program related expense, advertising time raises the total percentage of financial resources that the organization spent on program-related expenses. In the example above it moved the needle from 60% to 73% — donors and charity rating organizations generally like to see over 70% of resources being spent on program expenses. By running this PSA campaign the organization can now show that it spent 73% of its resources on program expenses, making it look better and more efficient to its donors.

Part 3

How to Succeed with Broadcast PSAs



5 Essential Dos and Don'ts for Successful Broadcast PSAs

Whether you're new to PSAs or hoping to improve results on your next campaign, these five tips are a smart place to start.

✓ Do provide multiple PSA lengths

Offer stations a mix of lengths so they can choose based on their inventory. If you only provide a :30 second spot and they are full of :30s, they may pass on your campaign. By providing other length options, you have more chances to have your PSA chosen. We recommend providing :60, :30 and :15 second spots.

✓ Do include a Call to Action

Every PSA must have a call to action at the end. This can be as simple as, "for more information visit our website." Stations are more comfortable when viewers have a next step to take once they have viewed the message.

✓ Do send PSAs at least four to six weeks in advance

If your cause has an awareness month, we recommend sending your PSA a minimum of four and an optimum of six weeks in advance of when your awareness month starts. Each station differs in their practices. Some review right away, while others pile up incoming PSAs and review the backlog once every few months. It's always best to err on the side of caution.





Do include an “evergreen” PSA with one that is time sensitive

For organizations creating PSAs for a special awareness month, we recommend including another set that is more evergreen (evergreen means the PSA can run at any time of the year). This way if a station cannot air the dated awareness PSA in time, they have the other option so you don't lose out completely.



Don't feature a current TV star

Some nonprofits tend to think celebrities are needed for credibility, but PSA directors are not swayed by big name talent. Rather, stations tell us they look at the message and relevance to their audience. Celebrities who are popular on a television show may cause other networks to avoid your PSA because they may view it as promoting that competing station. Celebrities also sometimes get involved in scandals that can tarnish your organization by association. A non-celebrity spokesperson keeps the focus on your message.



Money Talk: Asking for Donations and Thanking Corporate Sponsors

Stations donate free airtime to share messages that are important to their audience. This makes them look like good stewards of the airwaves and builds goodwill in the community. So, it's understandable that stations may get uncomfortable if PSAs ask for donations or call out corporate sponsors. Stations are willing to share a message; but money talk can obscure their good intentions.

Knowing how to handle asking for donations and including corporate mentions can mean the difference between a missed opportunity and PSA success.

How to Ask for Donations

At one time stations were against a pitch for funds, but many have come to understand the importance of donations to nonprofits. To meet stations halfway, we recommend against making the PSA all about donating.



Rather, try a more subtle approach by including an end tag that says, “for more information or to donate visit our website at (insert URL).” We also recommend including a second set of PSAs that do not mention donations. That way stations that don't want to air a donate message can use the non-ask version.

How to Recognize Corporate Sponsors

Sometimes a corporate sponsor may want visibility in the PSA. While the majority of stations would prefer to have no corporate mention in the PSA, if there's no way around it, you can incorporate the corporate ID at the end tag. Where you may have “A Public Service Message from ABC Nonprofit,” you can add an additional message in smaller font that says “in cooperation with XYZ Corporation.” There should never be any visual of a brand product in the PSA.

We also recommend giving the stations two versions, one with the corporate mention and one without. This way you won't lose out if they cannot air the corporate version. Corporate-sponsored campaigns can work well for digital media where corporate identity is not an issue (but advertising costs tend to be higher).

Common Challenges PSA Campaigns Face & How to Overcome Them

How do we deal with budget constraints?

Focus on the message rather than production value

Few nonprofits have the resources to spend six-figures on a PSA production.

Fortunately, stations tell us they are not swayed by big-ticket production values, rather, the number one reason they will choose a PSA to air is because the message is of importance to their viewing audience.

Using animation, stills, or a spokesperson shot against a green screen can be effective while keeping costs more affordable. You can even reuse footage that was shot for other purposes and create a PSA from that.

Digital delivery has brought distribution costs down significantly. Nonprofits no longer need to send hard copy tapes, which means they can get their message to many more stations at a lower cost. Currently, digital delivery can go to as many as 1,900 television stations and 9,100 radio stations.

How do we reach a specific target audience?

Try an integrated campaign

Broadcast PSAs help you reach a wide audience, but if you want to make sure you're targeting a very specific audience, include digital media tactics in your campaign.

Adding digital media helps you hone in by age, gender, marital or parental status, occupation and other demographics.

This method is more expensive than broadcast PSAs since digital platforms don't donate unused ad space. So you'll need to pay for placement out of pocket. However, they can be a successful complement to an existing broadcast campaign.

You can target these audiences through display ads, search ads, and anywhere else they spend time online. Combining digital and broadcast tactics gives you the widest possible reach for your PSA campaign.

How can we reach Hispanic or multicultural audiences?

Design specifically for this audience

The media like to serve all of their audiences with important messages. Spanish-language stations, in particular, tell us that they are underserved with PSAs.

For Hispanic audiences, send the PSA in both English and Spanish (not just with Spanish subtitles).

We also know PSA Directors will check the nonprofit's website to make sure there is an *En Español* section. Stations want to make sure their Spanish viewers don't get frustrated on hearing a Spanish message then going to a website that's only in English.

If reaching people of a specific ethnicity is important to you, consider creative and culturally relevant messaging. Also, include people of that ethnicity as actors or voiceover artists.

Get Expert Insight from the Start

Too often, nonprofits come to us with a PSA already produced that has issues we know will impact station acceptance. Worse, we could have eliminated the issue and achieved greater success if the client had included us in the production phase.

If you're contemplating a PSA campaign, don't start with the producer. While the producer knows how to make a video, they do not have the media knowledge to know what stations are looking for and what might be a deal-breaker. Start by talking to the distributor to help formulate the framework for the PSA and anticipate common challenges.

What should we keep in mind as we plan our PSA?

We're so glad you asked!

Then find a producer who can combine your message with distributor guidance to make a successful PSA. Our goal is not to interfere with the creative process, but to make sure the end product is acceptable to stations so the nonprofit has a successful campaign.

Beyond Broadcast: Expand Opportunities by Placing PSAs On Other Media Channels

The most effective marketing campaigns use a mix of media to reach audiences in different places. While this guide focuses mostly on broadcast PSAs, there are other opportunities for nonprofits to share their messages.

Digital Placements: Search Ads, Connected TV, and Streaming Platforms

Digital placements are a perfect complement to a broadcast campaign. While a broadcast PSA can reach the masses, a digital campaign can target a specific key audience.

Digital campaigns on websites, streaming platforms, and CTV can use demographic targeting. Geographic targeting help you reach people in a specific region, state, city or zip code. Location-based mobile marketing takes this further by feeding ads to specific targets based on their GPS coordinates in real time.

Demographic Targeting

- Age
- Gender
- Income
- Ethnicity
- Marital status
- Topic interest
- And many other audience characteristics!



Digital placements may include video, display ads, or a combination of both. Many of them are designed to allow visitors to directly click for more information, making it easy for a person interested in your organization to engage immediately.



If you have the budget, paid placements can put your PSA on platforms like Hulu, YouTube, Amazon's Prime Video and others streaming platforms. You can target audiences by device, reaching them on mobile, desktop, or Smart TV platforms including Apple TV, Roku, Amazon Fire and others.

All of this targeting comes at a premium. You'll pay per impression or click until your ad budget is spent. This makes digital placement an ideal solution for reaching a specific audience in a defined location. It's a valuable supplement to a general awareness campaign, but cannot match the reach of broadcast PSAs.

With so many options for digital placements, you'll often see the best results by partnering with an agency like Connect360. We can help you navigate the options and make recommendations based on your specific objectives, KPIs, and budget.

Out-of-Home Ads: Billboards, Place-Based Ads, Digital Street Furniture

Like broadcast stations, out-of-home ad companies also see the need to support nonprofit PSA campaigns. They do this through both donated and discounted placements on posters, billboards, or other displays.

PSAs often appear on street furniture like bus shelters, kiosks, and shopping mall panels. Because these placements fill space that is unsold, the nonprofit does not have control over placement site. Although the placement is donated, the nonprofit does pay for the production – ad development, printing or posting.



For nonprofits that want more placement control, many out-of-home companies offer special reduced rates. Of course, organizations can also pay for full-price placements in a range of settings. This could include gas-station TV, supermarkets, restaurants, or doctor's offices in addition to more traditional out-of-home placements.

Sometimes it's worth the cost to make sure the placement is visible to a key audience. For example, a campaign targeting Hispanic audiences may benefit from placement in Hispanic neighborhoods. Broad awareness campaigns will need to apply other tactics to reach a wider audience.

Print: National and Regional Magazines and Newspapers

Print PSAs can reach audiences who get their news and information from print publications. They allow readers to engage with the ad at their own pace – it's easier to write down a nonprofit's URL from a static print ad than from a broadcast PSA that flies by in a matter of seconds.

When doing a donated print placement, you need to be patient. Over the last few decades, changes in the print industry have pushed some publications out of business and others have reduced their page count. That means there is more competition for limited ad space.

If you want to include print in your campaign, plan ahead. Some publications plan their ad calendars as far as six months in advance. But, patience can pay off — a hit in a major national publication like the *Wall Street Journal*, *Us Weekly* or *People* is golden!



What to Ask a Potential PSA Distributor

If you are talking to multiple distribution companies, it may be hard to compare apples to apples. Here are a few key questions to ask before you commit to working with a distributor.

Who is doing the work?

Being a PSA distributor is an expensive business when you consider the costs to maintain all the data, the subscriptions to media databases to keep station information current, plus subscriptions like Nielsen, SQAD and others for tracking and measurement. There are companies who say they distribute, but they actually subcontract to another company. Find out who will ultimately be responsible for your results. At Connect360, we do the work.



How does the company define digital distribution?

Believe it or not, digital delivery can mean different things. Some consider digital distribution to be simple emails to the stations with PSA links. Connect360 believes in following station preference by distributing through Extreme Reach. This comes at a cost, but we believe it drives more success. Be sure you know exactly how your PSA will be digitally sent to stations.

How does the company determine the number of impressions and estimated media value?

Make sure that the distributor is using third parties for this information and is not estimating or using their own formulas. This is particularly important for media value because the Financial Accounting Standards Board requires transparency in how value is determined. At Connect360, both impressions and media values come from Nielsen and SQAD and all of our reporting is under the auspices of a CPA, who holds us to the highest industry standards.



If you're planning to run a radio campaign, ask if the distributor monitors and values radio. Many don't have the ability to track radio plays and valuations.



The key takeaway is this:

When choosing a PSA distributor, look for a company that has the experience and information they need to position your PSA for success. Bring them into the process as early as you can and lean on their expertise to help you reach your campaign goals.

Authors



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For over 25 years, Julie has been a strategic media counselor for all types of nonprofits, associations, government organizations and PR/marketing firms. In her role as senior advisor, Julie works closely with her clients to set campaign strategy and collaborates with the Connect360 team to ensure KPIs are reached and success is delivered.

Under Julie's stewardship her clients have experienced measurable results that have made a lasting impact such as increased brand awareness, upticks in website traffic, record-breaking campaign sign ups and more.



Ivette Achong

Vice President
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Ivette Achong leads Connect360's public service division and is the company's multicultural specialist. In addition to running the daily operations of the PSA department, Ivette works to strategize and execute public service campaigns to meet each client's objectives and budgets. She has established a record of success in garnering national exposure, as well as millions in donated media values and audience impressions.

Ivette's multicultural marketing experience, diverse ethnic background and fluency in Spanish have helped her clients successfully reach the Hispanic market via culturally-oriented campaigns.



Chelsea Olsen

Senior Business
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Chelsea Olsen is Connect360's Account Director and Senior Business Development Manager. She is responsible for managing client public service campaigns as well as spearheading the company's new business development and marketing.

Chelsea believes in supporting important social causes. She prides herself on really listening to the needs of each organization. A cornerstone of her approach is to conduct a thorough review with a nonprofit to understand their objectives. This helps her strategically recommend the best tactics to assure success. Chelsea is well versed in traditional earned media as well as today's newer options on digital and social media.

Why Choose Connect360 for PSA Distribution?

Experience matters. Connect360 is the largest distributor of PSAs in the United States. We handle more campaigns each year than any other distributor, with the exception of the Ad Council.

On average, we launch 90+ campaigns per year. In 2022, Nielsen reported our television and radio PSA campaigns received in excess of 3.1 million airings, which generated almost \$800 million in donated media value. In fact, Nielsen confirmed that one in every five TV PSA airings detections was for a PSA distributed by Connect360, excluding the Ad Council.

Our highly experienced staff have decades of success placing PSAs on television and radio stations, CTV and other digital media, as well as out of home media. Our unique insight also helps clients develop and place Spanish and multicultural campaigns. We work with Charity Navigator's highest-ranked nonprofits, well-known professional associations, Fortune 500-supported foundations, government agencies, ad agencies and public relations firms to share important messages for the good of their audiences.

Most importantly, our team cares about the success of every campaign. We take the time to understand your unique needs and goals. Then we create a customized strategy backed by a hands-on approach to campaign management.

For more guidance on PSA distribution, visit c360m.com or contact us directly using the information below.



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