



ACS Today

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advocacyandcommunication.org

Winter 2013

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WHAT'S NEW

ACS has received national certification from the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) as Women's Business Enterprise (WBE). We've also been certified as a Small Business Enterprise (SBE) by Ohio's largest County government, Cuyahoga County. Both of these certifications will help us reach new clients and build new organizational relationships in the coming year. It's rare to be a small, woman-owned advocacy and direct lobbying firm, and we're proud to help open new doors!

ACS is now providing featured content for Salsa www.salsalabs.com the leading online advocacy tool for nonprofits. Look for our latest article, "Critical Components of Public Awareness Campaigns" in Salsa's Advocacy Unleashed e-newsletter here <http://advocacyunleashed.kontribune.com/articles/1371>

Happy New Year!

We hope that everyone had a wonderful holiday surrounded by family and friends. Now, it's time to get busy making 2013 another meaningful and rewarding year. In this newsletter, you'll find tips to consider as you plan your year, examples of smart advocacy and communications activities to consider, and ways in which we can help. It's going to be a great year!

Eight Great Things to Accomplish in 2013

Want to take your advocacy or communications efforts to the next level in 2013? Here are eight things to consider as you take a look at the coming year. Start working now, and you'll look back on some great accomplishments in 12 months!

- 1. Help shape a new law.** Ohio's legislation that mandates a letter grade (A-F) rating system for schools was signed into law on December 20, 2012—but not without significant input from The Ohio 8, a coalition of eight metropolitan school districts. ACS helped the Ohio 8 stay on top of legislative developments and ensure their voices were heard as the legislation was debated and edited to its final version. See The Ohio 8's Senate testimony at www.advocacyandcommunication.org/TheOH8_Testimony_SenateEd_HB555_Dec10.pdf
- 2. Take a stand on the front lines.** For the past two years, ACS client Columbus City Schools has served as a test site for proposed "parent trigger" legislation that would allow parents to push for new management of their child's public school building. This year, as new legislation looms to take the parent trigger statewide, ACS is poised to help CCS become a major voice for informing the debate. [Continued on page 3](#)

ACS' "Boots on the Ground" Make Great Strides for HMS

Health Management Systems, Inc. (HMS) is a national healthcare cost containment company that helps publicly funded healthcare programs protect that funding and stretch it as far as it can go. But successfully growing this business means understanding the ins-and outs of policy happenings at state houses around the country. In Ohio, HMS works with ACS to build key relationships and keep communication flowing.

"ACS has been our boots on the ground in Columbus for almost 3 years, representing us before Ohio's Medicaid agency, Office of Health Transformation, the legislature and other stakeholders," says Kristen Ballantine, State Government Relations Director for HMS. "They've also kept us abreast of political and policy happenings, specifically tracking legislation, regulation and policy discussions on matters of interest to us."

Whether it's researching impending policy trends or identifying specific client prospects, ACS Vice President Scarlett Boudier has worked closely with HMS to help the company identify new opportunities for growth and present itself as a preferred partner. "ACS has been a key component of our business development agenda, helping to identify,

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Recent Appearances

December 2012

Phoenix, Mesa and Avondale, Arizona

Task force facilitation

Lori McClung and Scarlett Boudier facilitated three regional focus groups for First Things First and regional partner councils and providers to gather information about whether and how regional boundaries might be changed to better assist in program funding and implementation.

November/December 2012

Phoenix and Mesa, Arizona

Focus group research

Lori McClung and Scarlett Boudier led eight focus groups with community outreach staff, parents and providers from the First Things First Family Resource Centers to gather information that will help shape how FTF communicates about the services available within the Maricopa County Family Resource Center network.

Keep Earned Media On Track and On Target

Earned media (the news stories, OpEds, interviews, etc. that you don't pay to place) is a critical part of public awareness campaigns. It can give added credibility to your organization, build awareness of the issue(s) you care about, and boost your brand. But while many organizations start off strong with great intentions for garnering ongoing earned media, they often fall flat during implementation because they've no way to keep track of their efforts and keep them focused.

One way to avoid losing steam on earned media is to develop your own [Earned Media Implementation Chart](#). This basic calendar grid will help you keep track of what stories you should be pitching, when, and to whom. Best of all, the Earned Media Implementation Chart will help you keep an overall focus on your strategic communications goals, and avoid getting derailed by the unexpected.

For example, say there were two organizations that wanted to build community support for early childhood education funding over a two-year period leading up to a key election. The first organization recognized earned media as a way to “get the word out,” and started out with great energy, casting about for stories that might be of interest to local reporters. They jotted down a list, and pitched stories about their organization and their work, but never quite created any momentum and eventually gave up.

The second organization carefully charted out a plan for implementing their strategy. First, they would concentrate on building awareness of themselves and the issues of early childhood. They began by pitching information about the organization to key reporters, but quickly followed up with stories about their program work, new reports about early childhood, and stories that exemplified what early childhood issues “looked like” in their community. Next, they worked to position themselves as subject experts, creating OpEds, pitching stories that tied national early childhood news to their community, and calling attention to early childhood needs and shortfalls. Finally, they focused on the public policy aspects of early childhood, including funding, and publicly asked candidates in the upcoming election questions about early childhood issues.

A good Earned Media Implementation Chart will include a list of the stories you'll want to pitch (in strategic order), the reporters/news outlets to target (including social media), the person responsible within your organization for developing and pitching stories, the period of time you'll concentrate on each story or subject, and when you'll move on to the next target. Using a chart will allow you to quickly see where new stories can be inserted to capitalize on new developments, and will also help you stay on track despite the twists and turns that may occur in your organization or your community.

Take a look at a snapshot of our [Earned Media Implementation Chart](#), and [contact us](#) for help in creating a plan for your organization that's both strategic and effective! ▲

ACS Team Spotlight

Scarlett Boudier Vice President

Scarlett directs strategic communication planning, government relations and advocacy efforts, policy analysis and strategy development for ACS clients.

Scarlett has 15 years' experience in government relations and communications. In 2007, she left ACS to join the administration of Governor Ted Strickland, where she was appointed as Director of Communication & Marketing and later Chief of Staff at the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, the state's largest agency. Scarlett rejoined ACS in 2009.

Scarlett also has held government relations and communication positions for:

- The Cleveland Municipal School District
- Planned Parenthood of Greater Cleveland
- The Greater Cleveland Film Commission
- Ohio Alzheimer Council
- Ohio Democratic House Caucus Races

She has strategic communication, legislative and administrative experience at the local and statewide levels representing corporate, government and non-profit entities. Scarlett has also developed and led strategic communication efforts for more than 20 local and statewide candidate and issue campaigns

Recently, she concurrently developed and led communication and marketing strategy for two cabinet level agencies, including Ohio's largest state agency with an operating budget of \$18-billion, responsible for Medicaid, workforce and child welfare programs.

Previously, she secured a seven-year joint venture contract at Cleveland Hopkins Airport for the nation's leading transportation retailer to provide all the retail concession services.

Scarlett has authored an analysis of the impact of the "No Child Left Behind" Act on Ohio school districts that was published by Cleveland's leading human services research organization.

Scarlett has been a Trustee of the Greater Cleveland Gay & Lesbian Center and Environment Ohio. She previously served on the Ohio Healthcare Workforce Advisory Council, and Cuyahoga County Health & Human Services Levy Steering Committee.

Scarlett earned a bachelor's degree in Political Science from The College of Wooster. Scarlett, her husband and their son live in the city of Columbus.

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Eight Great Things to Accomplish in 2013

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- 3. Create a communications plan.** As the largest county government in Ohio, the Cuyahoga County Council has a great deal of information it needs to share—in a smart, strategic way. Fortunately, it's starting the year off right with a communications plan created by ACS.
- 4. Make a splash.** Some news is just too good to keep quiet — like the National Network of Consultants to Grantmaker's new Project Director. They used ACS to manage the national announcement of this new hire, reaching scores of philanthropic organizations, media outlets, funders and partners with their news. See the press release [here](#).
- 5. Inform the debate.** Even when the "fiscal cliff" debate reached a fever pitch, a joint effort among all Ohio 8 districts to pass board resolutions on the matter made sure that the threat to public education was front and center. In fact, with help from ACS, the Ohio 8's media outreach informed discussions about public education policy throughout 2012—and will continue to do so in 2013. See the Ohio 8 press release [here](#).
- 6. Secure public funding.** January means budget time in Ohio, and ACS will help a number of clients state their cases for funding to the powers that be. From early childhood, to K-12 education, to Medicaid, we'll be fighting to help our clients secure ongoing funding for their vital work.
- 7. Launch a new project (or three!).** In 2013, Arizona's First Things First (FTF), a major player in the early childhood movement nationally, will deepen and broaden its work on behalf of young children with three initiatives: Quality First, Family Resource Centers and an expanded organizational communications and outreach effort. Once again, they'll turn to ACS as their partner to develop comprehensive strategies for each of these efforts. Learn more about FTF [here](#).
- 8. Hone your skills or learn something new.** There's no shortage of new ideas and ways to improve your communications and advocacy work. Join countless ACS clients who will host or attend one of our training sessions in 2013.

What great things will you accomplish in 2013? No matter what your goals, ACS is here to help you strategize, plan, implement, and get results. ▲

ACS' "Boots on the Ground" Make Great Strides for HMS

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research and open the door to new opportunities that increase business for us," says Ballantine. "Scarlett in particular helped us identify opportunities to work with state's active employee health plan and took the lead in helping us present ourselves to them. In addition, Scarlett and ACS have been key in helping us identify potential champions in Ohio and develop those relationships."

Within HMS, Boudier helps each of the company's business units understand the potential impact of government interactions. "Scarlett is more than a lobbyist—she's part of our advisory team," Ballantine explains. "She helps us find where politics and policy intersect with different aspects of our business. She helps us see the political realities, and identify the opportunities and risks so we can develop strategies accordingly."

"The entire staff at ACS are consummate professionals," Ballantine concludes. "They are very experienced in government relations, and are able to adapt to multiple business units of our company and balance the interests among them. And with our interest in serving publicly funded clients, ACS's level and quality of contacts at Medicaid is unsurpassed, and their subject matter expertise is very valuable to us."

HMS currently employs more than 100 people in Ohio, and has helped the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services save more than \$800 million in Medicaid-related expenses, and has an eye toward expansion in 2013. ▲

Be Empowered.

Want to learn how communication, strategy development or advocacy can move your organization forward? ACS is available for training sessions or conference presentations. Contact us for more information. Want more suggestions on improving your communications or strengthening your advocacy work? Contact us at info@advocacyandcommunication.org or call us toll-free at 1-877-372-0166.

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