5 Big Ideas for Rural & Small Communities
Agenda

1. Tell Your Story via the Media
2. Activate Your Biggest Fans
3. Connect with Residents
4. Create a Content Hub
5. Leverage State/Regional Partnerships
TELL YOUR STORY VIA THE NEWS MEDIA
What Makes News?

• FUEL Assets
  • First
  • Unique
  • Extraordinary
  • Largest

In addition to...
• Breaking news
• National trends (though less and less)
• Stories that go beyond the news to show impact on companies, industries and people
• High-profile personalities (and their op-eds)
• Controversy
In a Gang-Ridden City, New Efforts to Fight Crime While Cutting Costs

By ERICA COODE  JAN, 30, 2012

Two police officers patrolling in Salinas, Calif., stopped a young man to question him and check for gang tattoos. Vigorous antigang efforts have gotten results, but budget woes have made continued progress uphill work.  Monica Almeida/The New York Times

SALINAS, Calif. — People in California generally know two things about this agricultural city nestled among lettuce fields east of Monterey’s beaches and hotels: John Steinbeck was born here, and it has a big problem with gangs.
The Salinas Story

FAST COMPANY

Why The World's Salad Bowl Wants To Go High Tech
Salinas, California, wants to be a tech hub for the farming set.
JESSICA LEBER
January 21, 2015

If you’re eating a salad for lunch today, there’s a good chance it came from California’s Salinas Valley, the rich agricultural area an hour’s drive south of Silicon Valley where more than two-thirds nation’s leafy greens are produced. There’s also a decent chance it got to your plate with the help of a robot.

Farming fresh produce has always been a high-precision, labor-intensive operation compared to crops like corn and wheat. But faced with the declining availability of farm labor and a growing demand for sustainable and water-saving fresh produce, agricultural producers in the Salinas Valley are working to rely less on people and more on technology. And, perhaps counterintuitively, the city of Salinas is doing its best to help them.

Los Angeles Times

Salinas reboots itself
The city hopes to become the state’s agricultural technology center and to turn the children of farmworkers into computer scientists.

BY GEOFFREY MOGAN
REPORTER FROM SALINAS, CALIF.

Dario Molina, 27, who once worked in the fields of Salinas, Calif., is now enrolled in a program at Hartnell College’s Agriculture campus that earns a four-year computer science curriculum in three years.
DEAL OF THE WEEK

A Reinvention in Michigan

By MAURA WEBBER SADOVI
June 26, 2012 7:38 p.m. ET

A Rust Belt community on the shores of Lake Michigan is about to get another boost in its unlikely bid to reinvent itself as a resort destination named Harbor Shores.

The area that includes Benton Harbor, Mich., and neighboring St. Joseph became a manufacturing center after Whirlpool Corp. was founded there in 1911. Two years ago, Benton Harbor made national headlines when it took a major step in its transformation by opening a Jack Nicklaus Signature golf course that received rave reviews. It hosted the Senior PGA Championship in May.
ACTIVATE YOUR BIGGEST FANS
Harnessing Word of Mouth & Digital Ambassadors

1. Recruit local influencers
2. Share positive stories about your community
3. Digital Ambassadors post to their social networks
4. Track engagement with target audiences

Great for business. Great for life.

How It Works

Step 1: Click on the “Sign Up” button and enter your information.
Step 2: Choose your preferred social networks.
Step 3: Share it by clicking “yes” in the emails that we will send with new content.
Step 4: Continue to share and show your support and enthusiasm for the region.

What is #NWAmbassadors?

The Northwest Arkansas Council Digital Ambassadors are a group of digitally and socially active area professionals, businesses, and community leaders who show their support and enthusiasm for the Northwest Arkansas Region by sharing positive news, announcements, and updates via their social networks.

Thank you for your continued support of the Northwest Arkansas region!
Hi Judy,

We love it when Northwest Arkansas companies with operations all over the globe take steps to strengthen what's happening right here.

Tyson Foods did exactly that today, announcing a major investment in downtown Springdale and indicating that they'll shift a portion of the company's workforce to a new downtown location.

This is huge news for Springdale's downtown, and we are excited to see the city's largest company giving it an incredible boost.

Thanks again!
03
CONNECT WITH RESIDENTS
Nearly all communities we’ve worked with – rural and urban – bemoan the “brain drain.”

Smart communities focus on “brain return.”
“Research shows that if by 5th grade, if youth have a positive experience in their community, they’re much more likely to stay in that community or come back to that community after college.”

*University of Nebraska Lincoln Extension – Central IV*
Connecting with Students
Valley County Economic Development/Ord Area Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska

1. Encourage businesses to get involved with youth
2. Talk with high school students each year
3. Reach out to college students
Tugging at Emotional Ties
Ord/Valley County, Nebraska

1. Connect with senior citizens to connect with former residents

2. Conduct outreach to residents’ family members who have an interest in returning to the region

3. Other ways to identify individuals:
   - Alumni databases
   - LinkedIn searches
04 CREATE A CONTENT HUB
Build Followers with Useful Content

1. Share stories about people who live and work in your region
2. Create your own “best of” lists
3. Showcase rankings and good news
4. Highlight local companies and business leaders
5. Showcase innovation in key industries
A Few Examples

1. Charles County, MD  
   (meetcharlescounty.com/blog)

2. ChattanoogaTrend.com

3. “Ord Sunshine Pumpers” – 60,000 page views in a year
LEVERAGE STATE/REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS
Wooing State & Regional Allies

• Build close relationships with your State & Regional EDO
• Invite them to visit your community every year
• Keep them updated on new developments
Opportunities for Collaboration with State/Regional EDOs

- Marketing missions
- Trade shows
- Special events
- Links to their website
Explore Tourism Partnerships

• Align your messaging

• Look for opportunities to partner with state, regional and local tourism agencies to showcase quality of life:
  • Media familiarization tours/reporter visits
  • Outreach to reporters in target markets
Summing It Up

1. Tell Your Story via the Media
2. Activate Your Biggest Fans
3. Connect with Residents
4. Create a Content Hub
5. Leverage State/Regional Partnerships