



**Regulation Matters:
a CLEAR conversation**

Episode 11: Finding Opportunities to Tell Your Agency Story – Marketing Tips **December 11, 2018**

Line Dempsey: Welcome to another edition of our podcast, Regulation Matters: a CLEAR conversation. I'm your host, Line Dempsey. I'm the senior investigator with the North Carolina Dental Board and I'm on the CLEAR board of directors, as well as the current chair of the National Certified Investigator Training committee and vice-chair of the annual conference program committee with CLEAR. As many of you may know, the Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation, or CLEAR, is an association of individuals, agencies and organizations that comprise the international community of professional and occupational regulation. Our podcast is a chance for you to hear the latest and greatest in our community. Today, I'm joined by Griffin Pritchard, public information specialist with the Alabama Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors. Welcome.

Griffin Pritchard: Hey, thanks for having me. This is a great opportunity to show what we're doing down here and possibly give some other agencies some things to think about going forward.

Line: Well, absolutely, thank you for joining me. Now, today's topic is finding opportunities to tell your agency story in a new way to your audience. There are obviously a lot of different elements involved, but maybe we can start with the question, why is it important for a regulatory board to have a marketing plan?

Griffin: Basically, it's how you wanna present yourself to your audience. You gotta think that you're not just presenting yourself to your profession or to your industry. You gotta think how you wanna present yourself to the man on the street and move beyond being, or having the stigma of being, just another state agency or just another regulatory board.

Line: Now, obviously, things like rule changes or law changes are things you have to communicate to the public and to your licensees. But what kind of things should you try to be communicating in this type of marketing plan?

Griffin: Well, you have to think about your message. And in my board, one of the things is we have to think about our mission statement. Our mission is to protect the public health, safety and welfare, and

it's great if you do that and tell it to your licensees. But how do you convey that message to an audience, to a guy on the street that, when you tell them who you work for, has no idea you even exist, your agency exists. How do you? You have to figure out the easiest way to convey the message of fulfilling what you do, the benefit of having your agency around.

Line: Well that brings up, I guess, a couple of points there, or at least audiences. You've obviously got your licensees, but then also the public that the board is trying to protect. How, I guess, should the message that you're trying to get out change according to which audience you're trying to speak to?

Griffin: You need to have a base presentation, which is basically just who we are, where we came from, how we got to where we are. And on top of that, you need to have your presentation which is your specific industry profession-specific, which is very technical. Beyond that, you could have a presentation talking about your investigation process. We do one on ethics; as a matter of fact, we just did an ethics webinar last week. But then you also need to have an elevator pitch for your general public, a quick, short 20 minutes that you can convey at least three points about what your agency does to an audience who's never heard it. On top of that, you need to have a message that you can give to the next generation, to your college students looking to move into the industry.

Line: For a lot of boards when they think of straight up marketing, they often think about either a printed material or an email piece that they do. I know for our board, we do a newsletter that's primarily directed towards the licensees. But I guess, kinda thinking outside the box, what other marketing opportunities should boards consider?

Griffin: Well, what you're talking about, everything there that you've mentioned is a marketing piece. Before we got into purchasing swag and purchasing of advertising, our biggest marketing was our newsletter. And it became an issue of, we still have our digital newsletter, which we produce to nearly 20,000 licensees, to printing 150-200 of that issue to take with us wherever we go. And we also changed the newsletter to an extent to where it features something that grabs everyone's attention, where if you just look at it, there's something in there you're gonna read regardless of if you know what we do or not. There's gonna be some kind of story in there that is eye-catching.

Line: Gotcha. Now, and I wanna come back to another area in just a moment, but you mentioned swag. I'm familiar with swag. We don't do anything with swag, but I guess, how are you utilizing that as another way to get the message out or, I guess, re-brand your agency or a regulatory body through the use of branded merchandise or, as we call in the industry, swag?

Griffin: Okay, so first of all, swag stands for (and I love this definition) "stuff we all get." That's the professional definition of swag. Everybody has been to shows and events where people are giving things away. Well, what I do is, I look at that and I try to find something better. Everything we give away has a dual purpose mostly, but it's branded with either our logo or our website. So we're driving people to our web page or to our social media through what we have. We have these things called mop topper pens, and they're literally bright orange pens with a round head with a face on it and

fuzzy hair on top. So, it sounds simplistic and child-like, but that's one of the things that we have that we can't keep enough of. We also have cell phone wallets. We deal with a lot of county engineers and a lot of county boards. Well, they're using us as a way to keep up with their gas cards or their business card holder, so it's spreading the name and it's building name recognition.

Line: Do you see an increase uptick in complaints by increasing your presence in the community that way?

Griffin: It's hard to tell because complaints vary from year to year. What we are able to do is make people feel more confident in filing a complaint, to make the general public feel more confident in filing a complaint. Cause that's one area of focus that anyone, according to our law, can file a complaint. You just don't have to be in the profession.

Line: Right, and removing any barriers to be able to do that.

Griffin: Right, and to that end, a lot of the things I go to, I'll make sure I have an investigator with me. So that way you see who you're dealing with, and you can have a conversation with our investigator.

Line: Well, that's very helpful. I guess getting back towards the line of marketing, what about communicating via social media? I mean, is that something that you guys do? What kind of advice can you offer other boards?

Griffin: We've grown, in terms of Facebook, we've grown from 53 to nearly 500 and it allows us to basically show what we do kind of almost on a day-to-day basis. We don't update day-to-day, but we update on a regular-enough basis that it's in seeds that people see what's going on and it's simple stuff. It's stuff like, "Hey, we have this webinar coming up," or "Hey, Griffin is traveling here or Bob and Bruce, our two investigators, are speaking at the State Fire College today." It gives a personality to what we do and it's not just this entity in Montgomery, which is where we're located, it's not just that we're this entity that exists; we're this entity with a personality that is actually looking to help and to be of service to our community.

Line: For boards that maybe don't have a marketing department or maybe they don't have a dedicated staff person to kind of handle this kind of stuff, what's the best way for them to implement some of these strategies that we've talked about with a small staff or a small budget?

Griffin: The easiest thing to do is look at, if you're traveling, if you're traveling to do shows or to do continued education type events where you're gonna be an exhibitor or a presenter, think about your message, and don't give the same presentation over and over again. Look for different opportunities to reach out to your audience, to your community, to help fulfill your mission statement. Change your newsletter. If you're writing a newsletter, and you're publishing one big newsletter twice a year, reduce the size and publish it four times a year. Change your information pieces. Right now, one of the big things is getting away from tri-fold brochures and going into almost postcards, putting the information

on a flipable piece of paper. But there's things that you can do. And also if you know of an agency that has a marketing person, reach out to them and sit down and talk to them and say, pick their brain. That's what I've done. This has been on-the-job training for me. And plus I have a really, really good board that has given me leeway to try things.

Line: That's great. I know many years back, I guess it was probably the Nursing Board, the Medical Board, our Dental Board and Pharmacy Board - we did put together some kind of, I won't call them brochures, but more like a postcard type thing, about what each different agency did and how to contact, their contact information on these things. So, that's a great idea to collaborate with another agency where you can maybe share the cost on some of these things.

Griffin: Yeah, you know, we're working with the Architects Board and we're developing a code officials handbook for building inspectors down in the state of Alabama. And there's a lot of times when I will go somewhere, the Architects Board will give me a box of their brochures to put on my table, just because engineering and architecture sometimes are very similar.

Line: Well, let me ask you one final question. I guess, if there was a take-home message that you'd like our listeners to hear with regard to this type of marketing, what would you say?

Griffin: The easiest thing to do is to think of if you were coming into the industry, from the general public, what would you want to know about your agency? How would you like to see your agency presented? Think of it as if you are marketing a business. And that's what we've done and that's been successful. We've approached our agency, the Board of Engineers and Land Surveyors, as a business and not as a state agency. And that's helped greatly.

Line: Well, great! Thank you, Griffin, for your time and being part of this CLEAR podcast. I really enjoy getting to speak with other professionals about regulation and its impact on our communities and how to reach those in our community.

So this January, CLEAR is hosting its Winter Symposium in Charleston, South Carolina, and the theme is "Managing Public Perception in and of Regulation." And this workshop is gonna include a presentation by a marketing professional familiar with regulatory organizations as well as real life examples from regulators in the United States, Canada and Ireland. You can find out more information about this and registration for this Winter Symposium on the CLEAR website.

Now once again, thank you, Griffin, for speaking with us today, and a big shout out to our listeners, thank you for being a part of the conversation. We'll be back with another episode of Regulation Matters: a CLEAR conversation very soon. Please subscribe to our podcast on Podbean, iTunes, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Google Play, Stitcher, Spotify or TuneIn. We're available in a lot of different areas. So, if you've enjoyed this podcast episode, please leave a rating or comment in the app. Your reviews help us improve our ranking and make it easier for new listeners to find.

Feel free to visit us at our website www.clearhq.org for additional resources, a calendar of upcoming training programs and events and, of course, that Winter Symposium that I mentioned just a moment ago. Finally, thanks to our CLEAR staff, specifically Stephanie Thompson, our content coordinator and editor for our program. I appreciate all the work she puts into this. Once again, I'm Line Dempsey, and I hope to be speaking to you again soon.

The audio version of this podcast episode is available at <https://podcast.clearhq.org/e/finding-opportunities-to-tell-your-agency-story-marketing-tips/>.