

Labor Day 2012

U.S. Department of Labor, Jan 1, 2013

Summary: 2013 Silver Anvil Award Winner — Events and Observances (Seven or Fewer Days) — Government

Labor Day provides an annual opportunity to highlight the U.S. Department of Labor's impact on millions of people across the country and around the world. In recent years the department's Office of Public Affairs has used the holiday as a "hook" to promote efforts that protect vulnerable workers, unveil new tools to assist jobseekers, and highlight other departmental initiatives. In 2012, with the department's centennial approaching, the Office of Public Affairs implemented a campaign to showcase the department's historic legacy, current relevance, and other important work.

Events and observances (seven or fewer days) includes programs or events scheduled for one to seven consecutive days (not including planning and preparation). Events may include commemorations, observances, openings, celebrations or other special activities, and must occur within a time span of one week. The government subcategory includes all government bureaus, agencies, institutions or departments at the local, state and federal levels, including the armed forces, regulatory bodies, courts, public schools and state universities.

Full Text: **RESEARCH**

We compiled and analyzed data to help identify key messages, regional targets and successful past strategies in order to maximize our outreach, including:

- *Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reports on employment data and workforce demographics, as well as DOL agency surveys and reports on the populations affected by their work.* This information was used to 1) identify target audiences including veterans, labor advocates and vulnerable, lower middle-class wage earners; and 2) identify issues of importance to these groups, such as workplace safety, fair hiring and employment practices, and job-seeking assistance.
- *Data from the U.S. Census Bureau and BLS* to identify key geographical regions with high concentrations of target audiences. We also targeted our messaging by reviewing our press releases from the past year to identify regions where our enforcement agencies had been particularly active. For example, findings indicated that enforcement agencies such as the Wage and Hour Division and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration were particularly active in Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas and San Francisco.
- *Our own Labor Day 2011 media coverage.* We found traditional outlet outreach had the greatest impact, but an emphasis on reach meant we had little data with which to benchmark outcomes. Interviews with newspaper editors revealed some dissatisfaction with 2011 op-ed content, suggesting a need for more streamlined message-development and pitching.

PLANNING

We aimed to raise awareness of the department's contemporary role and historical

achievements by:

- Emphasizing DOL resources for assisting jobseekers and vulnerable workers;
- Encouraging businesses to hire veterans, and educating veterans about assistance; and
- Educating workers about department history, programs and local impact.

Our primary audience was American jobseekers and workers, particularly those who are most at-risk of having their labor rights violated – including non-English-speakers and low wage earners. Our secondary audience included department employees, opinion leaders and policymakers. Our research helped define the demographics and geographic locations of our target audience, which we used to develop tailored materials for our regional offices to distribute. Interviews with editors revealed that a perceived lack of “newsiness” in op-eds pitched last year led some editors to not run them. Internal analysis also showed the op-eds were more likely to run, and to reach our desired target audiences, in smaller newspapers.

Drawing on this information, we established the following communication goals:

- Develop compelling narratives targeted to key audiences by creating at least three op-eds, and secure publication in at least 150 publications across the country. Adopt a hyper-local strategy by pitching op-eds to smaller newspapers and local content distributors, with the goal of increasing op-ed reach by 50% from 2011.
- Increase social media penetration by 25% over Labor Day 2011 using at least three platforms.
- Increase public interaction with the department via phone and email by 10% during the weeks immediately surrounding Labor Day.

Our budget was \$16,000 in professional time over eight weeks. All the products associated with Labor Day were produced in-house.

EXECUTION

Having identified our target audience and key messages, we set about developing materials and ensuring that platforms for interaction were in place. We drafted three op-eds focusing on department resources, hiring veterans, and DOL history and current relevance. Drawing on our demographic and periodical research, we established a hyper-local distribution strategy that identified the largest newspapers in each state and targeted those ranked 6 through 10. Our goal was to dig deep and focus on smaller areas that we had not targeted in the past. We tailored individual op-eds to specific regional audiences by inserting local data, and pitched the op-eds to targeted newspapers. We further amplified our outreach by distributing our op-eds at no cost through local news and information platform Patch as well as North American Precis Syndicate, which gave us a free release. By October 4, NAPS reported placements in an estimated 1500 “pennysaver” and weekly publications, and by January 29, that number had reached 2500.

In addition, we placed a special essay about faith and the legacy of former Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins in the *Washington Post* print and online editions, and reached out to universities around the country with an op-ed about administrative efforts to reduce the costs of higher education. Also, agency principals discussed department history and ongoing impact via radio and television interviews on programs whose audience demographics aligned with our target audiences.

We designed a Labor Day landing page for the web with information on all of our key messages to educate and engage the public. For the week of Labor Day, all dol.gov traffic went straight to the page. With a simple, visually compelling layout, the page provided quick access to videos and web pages on U.S. labor history; a regularly updated archive of Labor Day media coverage; links to apps, reports and online resources for laid off workers and jobseekers; and a photo gallery highlighting the department’s 2012 accomplishments. The page also prominently featured a subscription link to our weekly newsletter. Social media outreach included a video

message from the U.S. Labor Secretary in English and Spanish, two blog posts from her, a national Twitter chat addressing questions about the department's mission and history, and message amplification via Facebook and Twitter.

All this was also made available to department's 17,000 staff via the Labor Day website. In addition, staff received an email from the Secretary underscoring the importance of their work and linking to several Labor Day products. The 5,000+ employees that work in the national headquarters saw two elevator posters designed to commemorate the holiday, and an additional 12,000 employees saw them as banners on DOL's intranet landing page. The variety of materials, messages and media platforms, coupled with our tailored distribution strategy, ensured broad dissemination to our target audiences.

EVALUATION

Goal: Increase op-ed reach by 50% from 2011

We secured op-ed publication in nearly 150 newspapers with an estimated combined circulation of 3.8 million print plus 11.4 million online readers, exceeding our goal of a 50% increase from the 90 op-eds placed in 2011. Op-eds also ran on 219 Patch sites, and NAPS estimated the number of articles generated at more than 2500, with a readership of 20 million. In addition, we secured placements in all identified target regions. Television and radio interviews reached approximately 4.5 million viewers and listeners. All the interviews and op-eds had a positive tone and emphasized at least one of our core messages. The combined reach of traditional and social media initiatives surpassed expectations in terms of breadth, tone and effectiveness. Our message reached more people than ever before, and we received positive assessments of our strategy as well as our messages. The managing editor for Michigan's *Macomb Daily*, for example, reported positive feedback from readers who were impressed "a cabinet secretary would provide an op-ed to a small newspaper."

Goal: Increase social media penetration by 25% from 2011

In 2011, the Labor Day web page earned 195,257 page views; in 2012, it earned 269,974, a 38% increase. With the DOL blog, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, we used four social media tools to extend our message's reach. The Twitter chat reached nearly 70,000 people, and more than 43,600 people saw related Facebook material throughout the week of Labor Day. Nearly 36,000 of them saw the material because someone else shared, liked or commented on one of our posts

Goal: Increase public interaction with the department by 10% compared to weekly average

We observed increased activity on the DOL website, including 38% more traffic to the History of Labor Day page than in 2011 and nearly 50% more traffic to the landing page, 4100 more calls to our National Contact Center for the weeks surrounding Labor Day than in 2011; and 20000 more page views for an online tool to assist returning servicemembers in their job searches.

The result: significantly increased engagement between the public and the department. Our Labor Day outreach met or exceeded all our objectives and impacted an estimated 75 million people, effectively spreading the messages we chose to emphasize and increasing awareness and use of highlighted resources.