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 202/466-6512

Foundation News &  
 Commentary is published  
 by the Council on  
 Foundations, 1828 L  
 Street, NW, Washington,  
 DC 20036, 202/466-6512  
 Fax 202/785-3926

# Foundation

## NEWS & COMMENTARY

July/August 2004  
 Vol. 45, No. 4



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## Philanthropy Marketplace

### Laufer, Green, Isaac

[www.lgicommunications.com](http://www.lgicommunications.com)

by Sherri Alms

*As part of FN&C's new Philanthropy Marketplace, we are pleased to present a new feature, Spotlight, a detailed profile of a vendor that provides products and services to foundations.*

"Communications," Jessica Laufer says firmly, "is not a squishy field." As CEO and founder of Laufer, Green, Isaac, Laufer has almost 20 years of experience in showing people exactly what she means. She and her colleagues at the public relations/marketing communications firm believe that a communications strategy can and should produce quantifiable results. "The kind of strategic communications that we specialize in produces results because we plan it that way."

A "rare animal" in the communications field, Laufer, Green, Isaac has specialized in corporate social responsibility and social issue marketing since its inception, long before those terms became fashionable. With a staff drawn from widely varying backgrounds, including academia, journalism, public policy and advertising, the firm uses that range of expertise in its work for clients. The agency puts the same communications tools and skills that are used in the for-profit world to work in nonprofit organizations, including foundations.

It works with organizations to develop strategic communications plans and implement them. Its services include message development, market research, audience definition, creating communications tools and media relations. It also helps foundations with communications capacity building for its grantees. More recently, Laufer, Green, Isaac has assisted clients in strategic alliance building, forming groups of nonprofits to leverage resources, or putting a foundation and business together to work on an issue of interest to them both (see [winwinpartner.com](http://winwinpartner.com)).

### A Holistic Approach

Too often, Laufer says, people see communications and public relations as separate. But the reality is that communications and public relations should be intertwined with the work of an organization. She recommends that foundations think about their communications strategy when they begin thinking about a new initiative or project. "We've seen that many organizations, including foundations and nonprofits, view communications in an episodic or fragmented way. They focus on a couple of tools like a newsletter or brochure and consider that those tools are the strategy," she explains.

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Laufer suggests, however, that a holistic approach to communications is more effective and more likely to yield quantifiable success. She describes some of the necessary steps an organization should take:

**Consider your audiences.** It's critical, Laufer says, to list internal audiences, including staff and—in a foundation's case—grantees.

**Ask a lot of questions.** What are the objectives? What key messages are we trying to convey? What are the best methods and tools to reach those objectives? How will we know if we've succeeded? How will we measure results?

**Do research.** "No matter how close we or our clients think we may be to an audience, we are not that audience. The first step in an effective strategy is finding out everything you can about the audience," Laufer explains.

**Think carefully about the language you will use.** While they may seem similar, a foundation president and a corporate CEO may need to be communicated with differently. With a clear understanding of the audiences, you can craft the language so that they will pay attention.

**Focus on the best vehicles for your audiences and your objectives.** The tools you use to communicate—a website, a brochure, an advertising campaign, etc.—should be chosen after you know your audiences, have done research on their habits and preferences, and understand the results you want. Then decide what tool or combination of tools work best.

**Measure what you've done.** "We buck up against the idea that communications can't be measured," Laufer says. "Communications can be held to the same rigor as other sciences." Make sure you identify methods to test the results at the beginning of the process; then use them.

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Visit the [Buyer's Guide](#) to find out more about vendors.

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