

Insights from PSA Directors that Guarantee Your PSA Gets on Air



Spring 2022

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You've got budget in hand, creative juices flowing, a marketing plan that includes a PSA... now if only you could *ensure* your success and reach your ultimate goals!

Every year, we ask PSA Directors what trends they are seeing and what impact that has on their ability to deliver free media placements for nonprofits. We're still seeing the effects of COVID-19, but many are opportunities for you! Here are the highlights, but read on to see the complete data sets.

- 1** More station contacts will be in the office, which means you have more opportunities to interact with them via email, phone, and mail (or even in-person).
- 2** More than half of PSA Directors receive ten or fewer PSAs a week, yet 3 out of 4 have space for 10-40 per week! Get out there.
- 3** Ensure your message is not aligned with a for-profit company, as that may make your message ineligible for PSA space.
- 4** More PSA Directors than ever indicate they are willing to run a PSA with an ask for donations. While this is still a no-no at networks, you have a better chance at your local stations. If you have budget, experiment with this.
- 5** Make sure your PSA (or at least your pitch) gets local. Share a local story, show how funds are allocated locally, and prove that this is important for their viewers—this is the top checkbox to mark for a PSA Director.

And if you want the deepest, rawest insights, flip to the last page and see what PSA Directors said when we asked them, "what would make a PSA campaign stand out better and get your attention?" They lay it out direct as can be.



INSIGHT 1

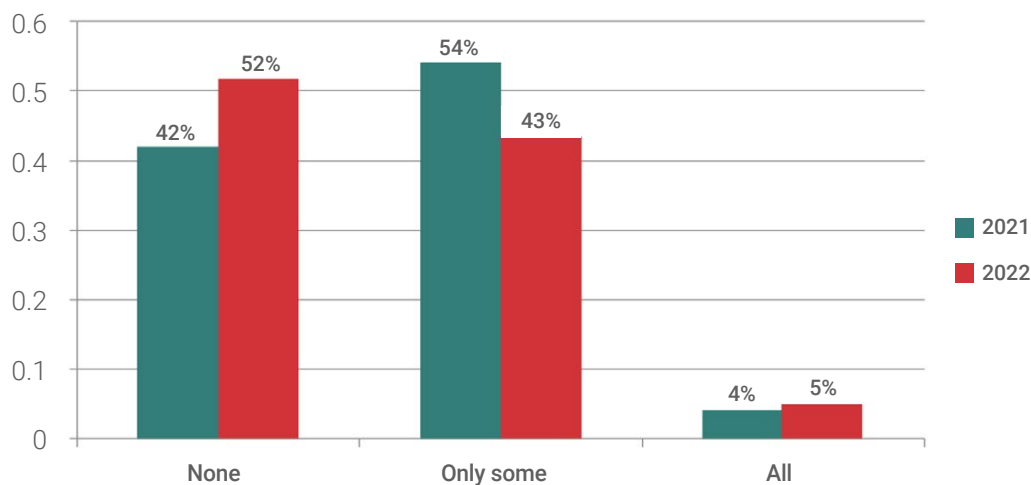
Not surprisingly, as COVID-19 begins to wane (should we even put that in black and white?), offices are opening back up. In our survey, almost half of the PSA contacts at TV and radio stations around the country said they would be more in-office this year than last. This also lines up with [PEW Center](#) research from January 2022, with 12% less of workers working from home all/most of the time.

The shift from WFH back to the office presents opportunities for nonprofits to interact more with station employees, as communication has been spotty over the past 24 months.

How much do you expect to be working in the office vs. remotely in 2022?



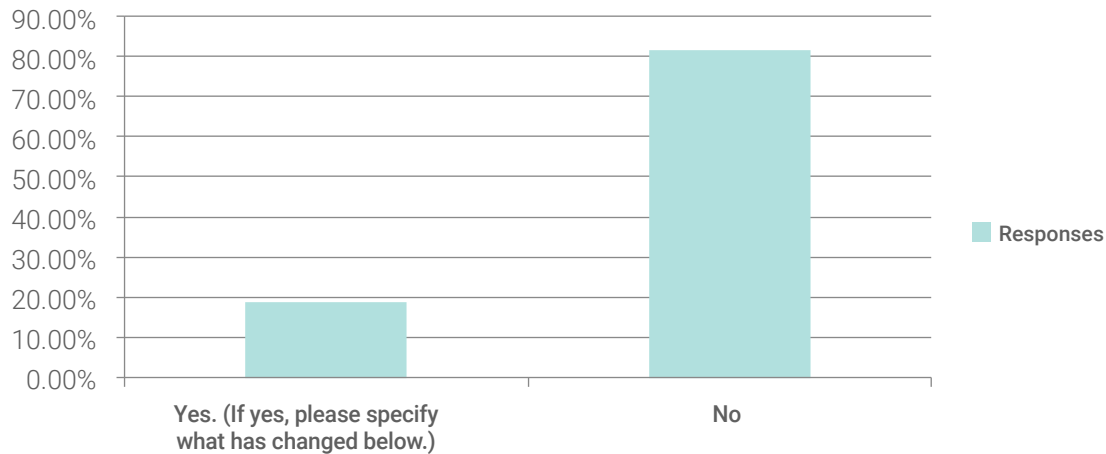
Has your station put other PSAs on pause to focus on COVID-19 messages?



INSIGHT 2

The majority of stations say that nothing has changed in station PSA interest and availability as we move from pandemic to endemic.

Has anything changed in terms of station PSA interest and availability Pre-COVID-19 vs. Post-COVID-19?



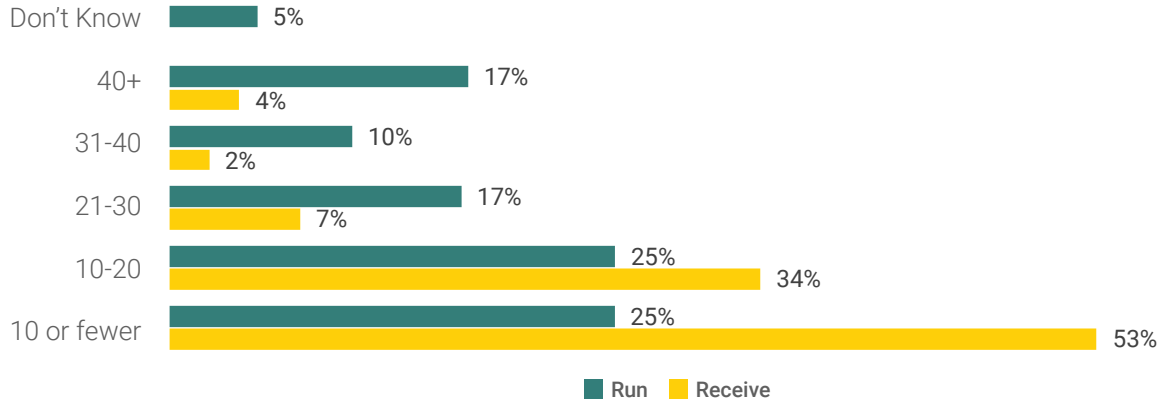
Some stations provided some insights that are helpful to understand the short (or long)-term changes:

- ✓ Perhaps the most prominent change is in health-related PSAs, where they were important to listeners before COVID-19, they are MORE important now.
- ✓ Higher emphasis on nonprofits with direct local services.
- ✓ The availability is less, we have received a lesser amount of PSA material.
- ✓ We're being sent more COVID-19-related PSAs, so there's been a natural increase in the number of COVID-19 PSAs being aired.
- ✓ Honestly - less requests over the past 2 years - more from religious entities than before.
- ✓ Do not receive as many by postal mail.
- ✓ Using fewer, mostly for story ideas, rather than running them directly.
- ✓ We've actually removed all of the COVID-19 PSA's. Listeners didn't want to hear them anymore.

INSIGHT 3

PSA Directors have space and perhaps not enough PSAs to fill it!
So get your message out there.

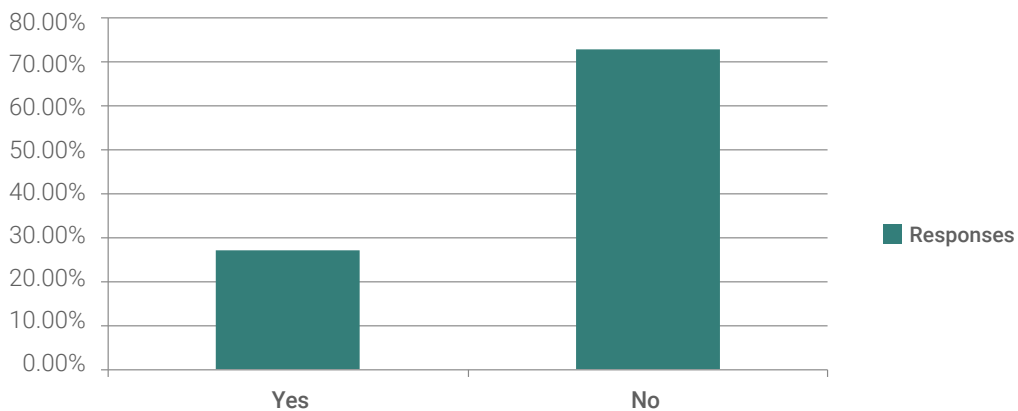
How many PSAs do you receive per week? How many different PSAs does your station run per week?



INSIGHT 4

We're creatures of habit! And PSA preferences aren't any different. If you're new to PSAs, there's always room for you.

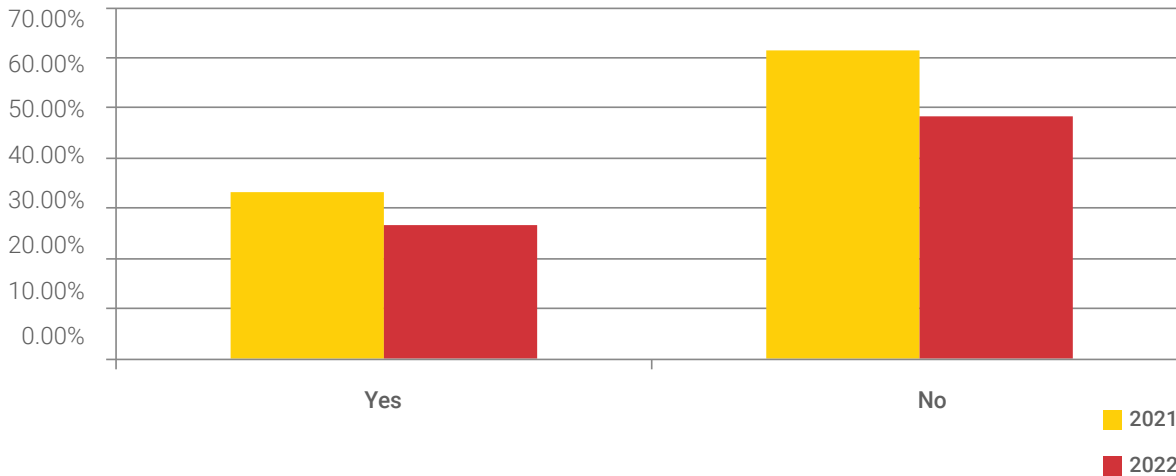
Will the type of PSAs you feature this year be different from you/your station's interests?



INSIGHT 5

PSA Directors WANT to air your message, but there are some instances where they may have pause.

If a PSA is promoting a cause that is supported through the nonprofit/foundation arm of a for-profit company, does it effect your ability to run it?



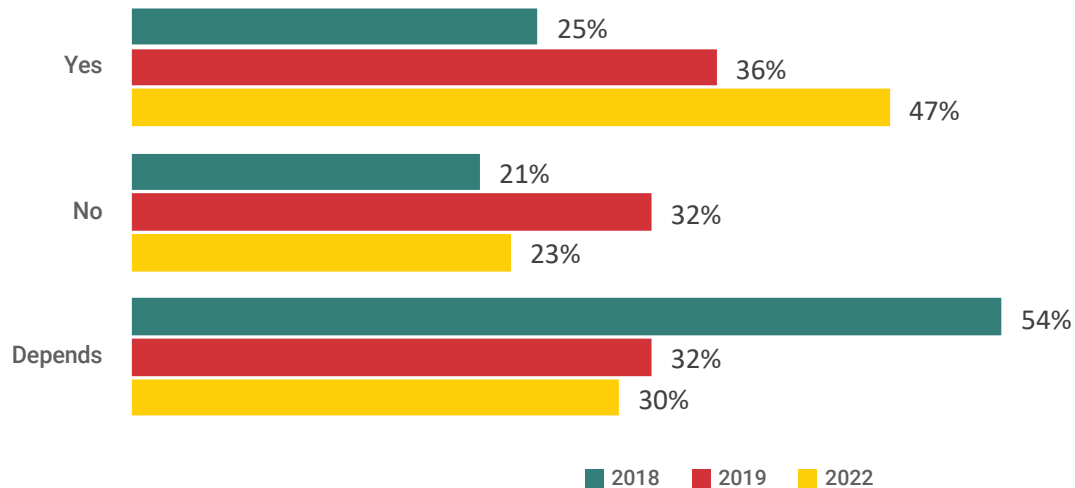
Here's where affiliation with a for-profit blurs the lines of PSAs and what to make sure to avoid:

- ✓ We do not permit for-profit company logos in PSAs.
- ✓ Generally, if there's any indication that the PSA favors a particular for-profit company or references it in any way, either it will be edited or not run.
- ✓ Except in extreme circumstances, we do not air PSAs that include mention of a for-profit company.
- ✓ We don't run PSAs with company logos or websites on them.
- ✓ The PSA cannot be the same as the spot that airs on the Paid schedule. Must meet PSA requirements.
- ✓ If the company name is only mentioned briefly as the sponsor, it would probably be okay...but if it sounds like a commercial, forget it!
- ✓ If I see a company's logo on it, or it comes from a movie, I would be more likely to not air it.

INSIGHT 6

COVID-19 may have softened stations to a PSA that asks for donations. Nearly half of PSA Directors said they would air a spot that had a direct ask this year! But, a lot did say, "it depends on who it is." So, if you asking stations to run your donation PSA for free, make sure you are upfront about where funds go and how you use them to impact the local community. Be upfront and transparent, and you have a greater chance of airing.

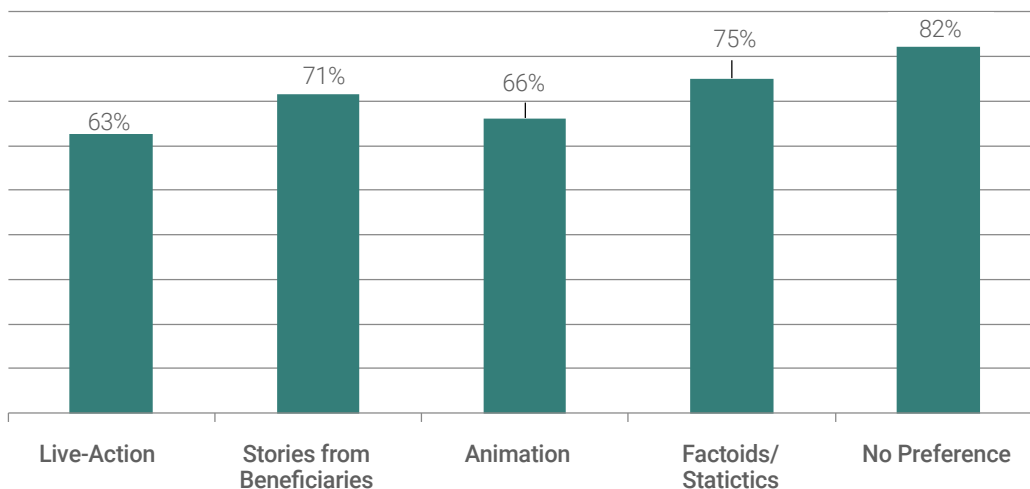
Will you air a spot that directly asks for donations?



INSIGHT 7

"This was a new question this year - we asked PSA Directors, "what type of creative appeals to you most"? And it turns out they like it all! Creative delivery may have less impact on how you make them feel, which can be done well in all types of visuals. Based on popular vote per category, factoids and stats, and stories from beneficiaries were on top by a slim margin.

What type of creative appeals to you most?

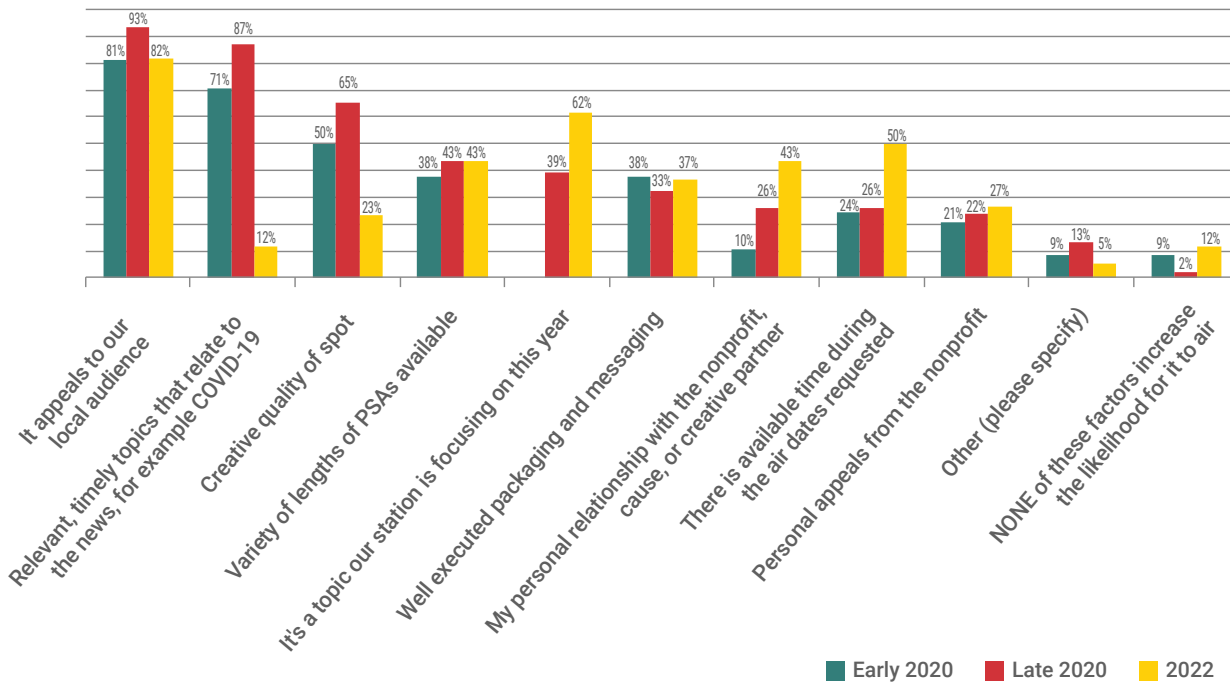




INSIGHT 8

PSA Directors are less likely to be interested in news-related topics like COVID-19, likely due to burnout over the past two years. They are more likely to default to whether the cause has a strong local tie or is a station priority, whether they have a personal relationship, and if there is time during the air dates requested. Make sure to have all three of these highlighted in your pitch to PSA Directors.

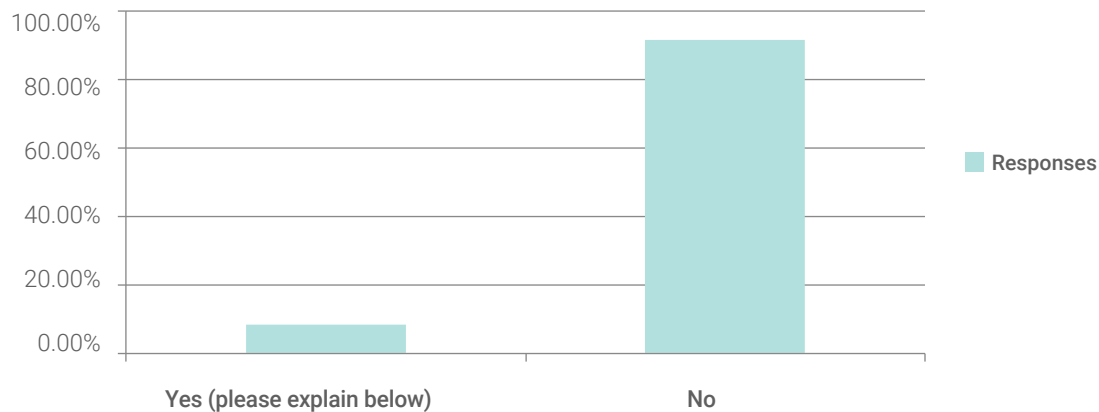
Do any of these factors increase the chance for a PSA to make it on air?



INSIGHT 9

We weren't surprised by the answer to this new question but wanted PSA Directors to confirm it and give us some feedback on why they would choose a well-known nonprofit's message over a smaller or lesser-known organization.

Are you more likely to run a PSA from a well-known nonprofit (one of the top 100 nonprofits) vs. a smaller lesser-known organization?



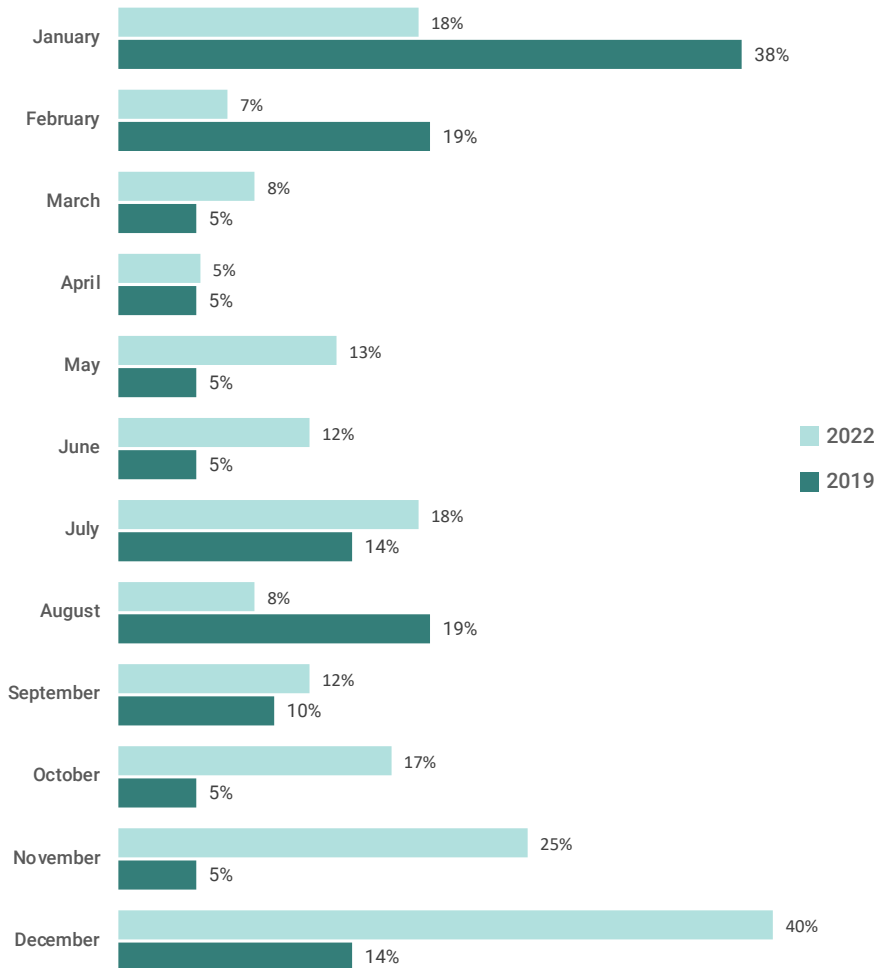
Here's what the minority said why they go with larger, well-known nonprofits:

- ✓ We are looking for messages that have the potential to help broad numbers of people
- ✓ It always helps to have name recognition of the charities/nonprofits we put on the air.
- ✓ I know what I am getting. Trust.
- ✓ Because those nonprofits have a brand and a reputation. I feel people are hesitant to donate to nonprofits they don't know about because of the negativity of some who have given a bad rap.
- ✓ Make sure you build reputation and trust through your creative and your website. That will be the first place a PSA Director visits to vet your organization if they are considering airing your PSA.

INSIGHT 10

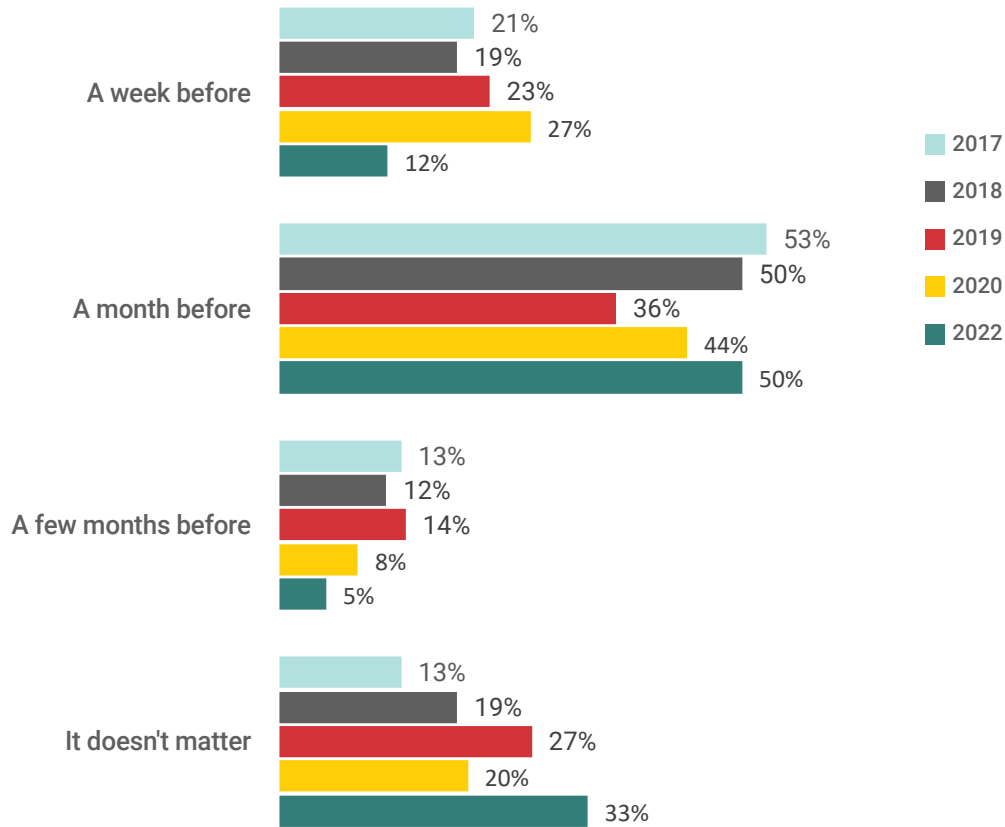
Year-over-Year, January and February are always some of the best months for PSA inventory as its after the holiday retail push. Ad dollars have been wildly fluctuating over the past 24 months due to COVID-19, so the volatility of these answers come at no surprise, but are also good news for nonprofits.

PSA Directors are saying that the end of the year is pretty open for PSAs, so consider adding PSAs to your media mix in your year-end fundraising plans.



INSIGHT 11

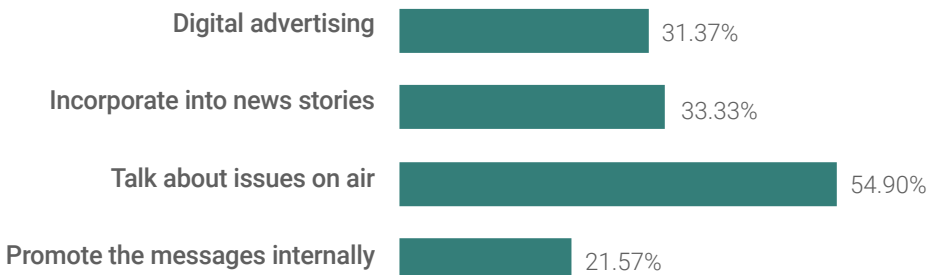
Half of PSA Directors say that if you'd like them to air a PSA at a specific time, they need a month's notice. Plan, plan, plan!



INSIGHT 12

We haven't asked this since 2017, but with the lines blurring between news and PSAs more than ever, there are opportunities for you to pitch other comms needs to stations.

Do you run other PSA materials?



 **INSIGHT 13**

And last but not least, in the words of the PSA Directors themselves, we asked them to tell us what would make a PSA campaign stand out better and get your attention.

- ✓ If it's **creative and attention getting** and if it has a **run-date with expiration** or if it is indicated- no expiration that would be good.
- ✓ PSAs should be straight forward, honest, well-researched, and focused on bettering life in this world generally. Humor is a great attention getter and fosters longer message retention. However, if it's overused, it can actually distract from the message intended. Background music and sound effects are the same way, if overused or over dominant. **The message is the thing. Sincerity, honesty, and maturity are paramount.**
- ✓ **Personal contact** from organizations, news cuts or interviews with sponsors or organizations.
- ✓ **Make it local.** Local...local...local.
- ✓ **Email** explaining the importance of the campaign.
- ✓ Compelling content, clearly written and **absent of jargon.** Sound helps.
- ✓ Being a **relevant topic that is affecting our world currently** and needs to be delivered to the public.
- ✓ Pamphlets that let us know beforehand that **gives us a "good" insight about the PSA.**
- ✓ Provide clear messaging of the need and action requested, **a variety of spot lengths,** give specific end dates, and impact representative found within our community.
- ✓ **Make sure to email and leave a voicemail** when possible as well. Often these email notifications go to a junk or spam folder, so alerting with a voicemail is also helpful.
- ✓ Just **make it easy** for me to listen to and for my production dept to download. Dont make me search for it.
- ✓ Having sources of information and **contact people** is of use to us.
- ✓ MOVIES STARS ARE A BIG DRAW!
- ✓ **Quality Creative** is KEY to getting it on the air for us. We pride ourselves for extremely high quality, professionally produced spots for air. So many PSA's come to us with the worse production possible... this is unacceptable.

For more information on marketing to nonprofits, visit williamswhittle.com.

About Julia McDowell

As Williams Whittle's PSA Specialist, Julia McDowell is a nonprofit marketing specialist with nearly 16 years of experience launching successful PSA campaigns nationwide for brands such as the American Red Cross, USO, SCORE, United Way, The U.S. Postal Inspection Service, The Mission Continues, and many others.

About Williams Whittle

Williams Whittle Associates Inc. is a 54-year-old full-service advertising agency based in Alexandria, Virginia that works with nonprofits and forward-thinking companies in the Washington D.C. area. Our team provides a full range of services unique to nonprofits including [Strategy, Creative & Branding](#), [Media & Digital](#), and [PSA Campaigns](#).

WW was named Marketer of the Year by the American Marketing Association for two successive years and has won more EFFIEs for results-based campaigns than any other agency in the region.

