

AMEC International Communication Effectiveness Awards 2016 Entry Form Template – Measurement Agencies

Category: Innovation award for new measurement methodologies
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Client: U.S. Army, Office of the Chief of Public Affairs
Campaign title: Meet Your Army: A New and Improved Toolbox to Measure Army Outreach

Objective/Brief:

There is a growing disconnect between the American population and the U.S. Army. Indeed, many Americans receive information about the Army by knowing someone who serves or served. Yet, less than 1 percent of Americans serve in the U.S. military today, so most people aren't exposed to Army service—what the Army's missions are, what service entails, and what soldiers do. Recent budget cuts have led to a reduction in the force; as the Army shrinks to its smallest size in decades, fewer Americans in the future will serve or know someone who serves. Over the past 15 years, the media has been another method to inform Americans about the Army due to attention focused on the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, as the Army draws down from these conflicts and attention shifts elsewhere, the media is informing fewer people about the Army.

This combination of factors indicated to Army leadership that more had to be done to keep Americans informed about the force to maintain its connection with the American public. Keeping Americans connected to the Army is an important objective that contributes to the Army's organizational goals of maintaining the American public's trust and confidence. This, in turn, develops a deeper relationship with the American public, furthering their support of the Army mission by encouraging their sons and daughters to join the all-volunteer force and by funding the Army with their tax dollars.

In an effort to inform and maintain its connection, the Army decided to renew its emphasis on telling the Army story to the American public through in-person outreach and media engagements. To spearhead these efforts, the Army's Public Affairs office kicked off a new program in the summer of 2015 called "Meet Your Army." The program was designed to bring the Army and Soldiers to communities around the country—primarily ones without a significant Army presence—and engage with the local public through outreach events. Events would be conducted through a variety of venues—schools, universities, veteran service organizations, and meetings with business and civic leaders—with additional outreach through the press and social media. Events were meant to drive in-person engagement between Soldiers and community members, and also push the Army story through press and social media.

"Meet Your Army" Program
<p>Background issue: Multiple factors indicate fewer Americans have contact with those who serve in the Army and fewer are aware of the Army mission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Less than 1% of Americans serve = most Americans don't have exposure to what the Army's like. ✓ Drawdown from high-profile mission in Iraq/Afghanistan = less news on what the Army is doing. ✓ Budget cuts = fewer people serve or know someone who serves, fewer resources for outreach.
<p>Organizational Goal: Maintain the American public's trust and confidence in the Army, so they continue to encourage their sons and daughters to join the all-volunteer force and fund the Army with tax dollars.</p>
<p>Communication Objectives: Through the Meet Your Army program, tell the Army story through outreach and media engagements to keep Americans informed of and connected to the Army:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increase Army connections with communities where Army presence is low or infrequent. ✓ Increase Army messaging through communication channels in communities visited.

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Strategy:

Barbaricum integrated several measurement instruments, including cutting-edge tools that were new to Army Public Affairs, to inform planning and assess the results of event execution. A robust measurement strategy was crucial to help the Army increase connections with communities where Army presence is low as well as increase Army messaging through communication channels. Measurement was vital to the planning process and ensured the Army engaged the right communities and stakeholders with the right strategies and tactics to maximize outreach impact. Measurement of results was essential to confirm objectives were met and, if not, recommend adjustments planning and execution.

Budget constraints were another key reason it was vital for Barbaricum to use an integrated and innovative measurement strategy. The Army had limited resources at the onset of the Meet Your Army Program, which narrowed the number and scale of the events. Also, measurement had to be conducted remotely as it was unable to fund travel to assess program results. Thus, Barbaricum chose the following integrated and innovative measurement tools to help the Army boost results despite budget constraints:

Social Network Analysis:

- **Dunami:** Barbaricum leveraged this tool—*never used by Army Public Affairs*—to use social network analysis to analyze stakeholder relationships on Twitter. Engaging stakeholders who are most connected to the community on Twitter maximized and targeted the Army's messaging reach.

Geocoded Mapping:

- **Tableau:** Barbaricum utilized this mapping tool—*never used by Army Public Affairs*—to overlay data sets from the Census, Army, and Vocus on a map of the United States, to consider multiple research factors when selecting locations for Meet Your Army events.

Traditional and Social Media Analysis:

- **Vocus:** Barbaricum leveraged its database of 3 years of coded media coverage about the Army to identify locations where Army news coverage and messaging was infrequent. Coverage coded after Meet Your Army events would be used to measure any increased coverage and messaging.
- **Crimson Hexagon:** Barbaricum created monitors using keyword, location and stakeholder information to assess social media activity about the Army before, during and after events.

Open Source Research:

- **U.S. Census databases:** Barbaricum collected U.S. population data by zip code to select areas with larger populations to maximize potential engagement and message reach.
- **U.S. Army data:** Barbaricum collected data on location and size of Army bases around the country to select areas for outreach where Army physical presence is absent or minimal.
- **Lexis Nexis:** Barbaricum gathered research on potential stakeholders—local government, community leaders, academic institutions, media outlets—to engage during events.
- **Open source internet research:** Barbaricum gathered additional background information on potential stakeholders and organizations to help inform Army leadership prior to outreach.

Execution/Implementation:

The first two Meet Your Army trips were considered pilot events, and took place in East Lansing, Michigan and Indianapolis, Indiana in the summer of 2015. These two trips were executed by the Army's Chief of Public Affairs and were test cases to establish best practices for developing a strategy for the following year. During these events, the Chief of Public Affairs engaged local government, business and civic leaders, media outlets, academic institutions, and veteran organizations. Barbaricum employed social network analysis, geocoded mapping, traditional and social media analysis, and open source research to research and assess the pilot Meet Your Army events and help shape the program's long-term strategy.

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All research was aimed at maximizing the Army's potential to achieve its objectives to increase Army connections with communities where Army presence is infrequent and increase messaging in communities visited. Measurement was focused on assessing these objectives based on event results.

Select locations: Barbaricum combined data from multiple measurement tools in order provide the Army with the best insight possible to inform location selection. Barbaricum used U.S. Census databases to gather statistics on U.S. population by zip code, Army databases to gather the locations and population size of Army bases in the U.S., and Vocus to export coded data of media coverage about the Army. Barbaricum then used the mapping tool Tableau to geocode this data into a map of the U.S, providing robust insight to inform Army planning. Barbaricum used this map to pinpoint areas in the U.S. where populations are significant but Army physical presence and media messaging are low or infrequent, in order to make recommendations to Army Public Affairs on locations to conduct Meet Your Army outreach.

Identify stakeholders: Barbaricum used multiple tools- Vocus, Lexis Nexis, Crimson Hexagon, and open source Internet research—to identify community leaders for Army leadership to engage. Research determined their background information, interests and visibility in the media. This included research on local media outlets to engage. Barbaricum compiled this information into reports that provided Army Public Affairs insight on individuals to engage that would help further Army connections and message reach.

Maximize outreach impact: While the intent of the Meet Your Army program was to tell the Army story to Americans through outreach and media engagements, limited funding for travel and events created challenges in reaching these objectives. With only one trip scheduled every few months, Barbaricum had to be creative in helping the Army find ways to reach as many people as possible during each event. Social media allowed for two-way dialogue, and was an excellent way to facilitate connections and relationship building without an increase in budget. While the social media monitoring tools Barbaricum typically used provided data on users and content, Barbaricum wanted richer insight on the relationships and connections between users. For Meet Your Army, Barbaricum leveraged Dunami and social network analysis to create visual displays of the Twitter networks in communities to identify the most connected stakeholders in geographic locations as well as within subgroups such as business, government, sports, and academics. Tweets from influential Twitter users had the potential to reach the most people, so engaging these users would likely help increase connections and message reach. Based on this, Barbaricum created reports with recommendations that provided insight to Army Public Affairs on which stakeholders to engage on Twitter to increase connections and messaging reach within the community.

Measure results: Following the first two pilot Meet Your Army trips, Barbaricum used its integrated suite of measurement tools to assess outreach event results. Specifically, Barbaricum compared data gathered before and after events to determine if events reached Army objectives. Barbaricum used Dunami, Vocus, Crimson Hexagon, and Lexis Nexis to measure both increased connections and messaging. Using Dunami and Crimson Hexagon, Barbaricum quantified increased social media connections and potential message reach on Twitter based on the number of community stakeholders connected to the Army on Twitter, and the number of tweets and retweets of Army content by these stakeholders. Barbaricum quantified the use of hashtags, photos, and referrals to assess indicators driving interest and engagement. Using Vocus and Lexis Nexis, Barbaricum quantified Army messages by examining local news articles reporting about the Army during and after the Meet Your Army outreach. Media analysis included the volume, tone, key stakeholder quotes, message penetration, and media outlet reach. Army connections with community stakeholders and messaging reach increased significantly following the two pilot trips.

Effectiveness of Assignment:

For the Meet Your Army program, Barbaricum's mixed method approach combining a unique set of integrated and innovative measurement tools provided Army Public Affairs with accurate, reliable, and new insights to inform decision-making in the planning and execution of outreach events.

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Measurement and effectiveness of communication objectives

Data collected during the first two pilot trips demonstrated effectiveness toward reaching communication objectives to increase Army connections with and messaging to local communities:

- There were 20 local news reports (8 online print, 9 radio broadcasts, and 3 television broadcasts) about the Army that communicated messages, compared to 0 in months prior to the trips.
- There were 470 total tweets about Meet Your Army directed to the local community for a total of 4.5 million possible impressions, compared to 0 in the local community prior to this outreach.
- Tweet volume nearly quadrupled from the first to the second Meet Your Army pilot event.
- Most tweet volume was driven by engagement with the Army (retweets of Army tweets).
- 47% of Meet Your Army tweets contained #meetyourarmy after the hashtag was designated following the first pilot event.
- The Army Chief of Public Affairs' Twitter followership increased 43% during the second pilot trip.

Impactful Recommendations

Barbaricum made various recommendations to the client based on research and measurement during the first two Meet Your Army pilot trips, many of which resulted in actions taken by Army senior leadership:

1. **Research and recommendation:** After the first pilot trip in Lansing, MI, Barbaricum's social media measurement showed there was no consistent use of a hashtag during outreach events. Barbaricum recommended designating a hashtag to drive interest and engagement in the Meet Your Army conversation: #meetyourarmy
 - **Client action taken:** Army Public Affairs like the suggested hashtag so much that they rebranded the entire campaign to be called "Meet Your Army" (before the first pilot it was called "Community Connect"), helping to drive engagement and raise message visibility.
2. **Research and recommendation:** Barbaricum's social network analysis of community stakeholder relationships on Twitter showed the Army how using this platform to engage influential stakeholders could be a cost-effective way to increase connections and message reach. Barbaricum recommended the Army Chief of Public Affairs join Twitter and engage (follow, tweet at) the most influential users.
 - **Client action taken:** The Army Chief of Public Affairs joined Twitter, and engaged (followed, tweeted at) recommended community stakeholders, resulting in increased connections and message reach to community stakeholders.
3. **Research and recommendation:** Barbaricum's social media measurement showed most tweets about Meet Your Army occurred during specific hours/days of during which outreach events took place. Barbaricum recommended the Army Chief of Public Affairs tweet before, during and after events to increase tweets over a longer period of time.
 - **Client action taken:** The Army Chief of Public Affairs tweeted before, during and after Meet Your Army outreach events, increasing connections with and message reach to local stakeholders.
4. **Research and recommendation:** Barbaricum used geocoded data in Tableau to pinpoint U.S locations with significant population but where Army presence and messaging was low/infrequent to recommended holding Meet Your Army events there.
 - **Client action taken:** Army Public Affairs requested Barbaricum update the map every quarter to drive long-term planning of selecting outreach locations, ensuring outreach would be effectively targeted to achieve objectives.