

Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI)
May 15, 2020, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
RMRI Communications Subcommittee
Meeting Summary - FINAL

ATTENDANCE

Participants: Jason Burckhalter, Bill Fisher, Stephen Hoye, Tim Kylo, Matt Lindler, Rick Meoli, Teddy Parker-Renga, Kelle Reynolds, Catherin Schloegel, Nick Schultz, Jodi Stemler, Steve Uline, and Nathan Van Schaik

Facilitation: Heather Bergman and Samuel Wallace

ACTION ITEMS

Matt Lindler and Kelle Reynolds	Create a Box folder for Communications Subcommittee to add photographs and videos.
Communications Subcommittee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review the wish list of images and videos and begin to add images and videos.• Take pictures of treatments in action and add them to the Communications Subcommittee wish list.

THE TRUTH PRESENTATION

Bill Fisher, Stephen Hoye, Rick Meoli, Nick Schultz, and Steve Uline gave a presentation on The Truth. Their comments are summarized below.

Introduction

- The Truth is a strategic design firm composed of three partners (Bill Fisher, Rick Meoli, and Steve Uline). Each of the three individuals worked together in various capacities before forming The Truth. Stephen Hoye and Nick Schultz also work with The Truth.
- Rick Meoli and Steve Uline live part-time in Steamboat Springs.
- The Truth works primarily in building outdoor brands because they are passionate about the outdoors. They have worked with a variety of clients, including Browning Ammunition and National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF), to build brands and deliver those brands to market.
- Bill Fisher, Rick Meoli, and Steve Uline each provide different services. Bill Fisher helps develop the branding strategy and package design. Rick Meoli provides imagery and photography. Steven Uline works on marketing and promotions. Additionally, Nick Schultz has experience creating digital strategy and content. Stephen Hoye is the director of strategy and researches to gain insight into public opinion and potential audiences to align brands with their objectives.
- The Truth team members have a variety of different generational perspectives. These different perspectives help the team develop communication strategies that appeal to new generations while not alienating older generations. The diverse generational perspectives on the team gives them an advantage considering there is a generational gap for outdoor brands.
- The brands that The Truth develops help organizations connect better with their desired audiences and achieve their business goals.

NWTF Branding

- Over the past year and a half, the Truth has worked with the NWTF to consult on the overall strategy of their brand and build creative assets. The Truth had two issues to assess with the NWTF. The first was the generational gap in the NWTF membership, and the second was that the NWTF had been largely successful at saving the wild turkey and needed to re-evaluate their mission. The Truth helped to identify how the NWTF can communicate their mission to a new generation in which hunting and the outdoors plays a different role. They also helped the NWTF rethink what the NWTF mission should be to reach new audiences without alienating current members. The Truth completed the discovery phase, which included researching and developing a concept message to help close the generational gap. Over the next year, The Truth is going to develop a marketing plan, build creative assets, and then implement the plan.
- The Truth presented at the NWTF convention to an audience of over 500 people and key leaders. The goal of the presentation was to introduce the new look, feel, and message of the NWTF moving forward.
- The NWTF, which is located in all 50 states and has 250,000 members and many chapters, is a large organization. Because of the size of the NWTF, a re-branding effort has unique challenges and opportunities.
- The Truth and NWTF created a roadmap and vision for the NWTF re-brand. The Truth began by defining the overall vision based on where the NWTF wanted to go. They had several workshops during which some NWTF members said they wanted to focus on hunting, and others said they wanted to focus on conservation. The conservation of the wild turkey is at the core of the NWTF, but the NWTF also works on preserving hunting heritage. Hunting also provides the funding and public outreach that allow the NWTF to continue their conservation work. At the same time, younger audiences do not see the relationship between hunting and conservation. The Truth worked to balance both considerations to develop a vision statement that was meant to bring conservationists and hunters together through shared values.
- Once The Truth developed the new vision statement, they worked on building the roadmap for the brand. The first step of the roadmap was to understand the range of potential members and different audiences, including turkey hunters, all hunters, outdoorsmen, and non-hunter conservationists. The goal of the NWTF re-brand was to help audiences understand that hunting is an integral part of conservation.
- The Truth worked with Ohio State University and Colorado State University to conduct a study to gain insight and data on how the general population and members of the NWTF value wildlife and conservation. New members are recruited from the general population, and so, it is important to know how NWTF members versus the general population view wildlife. Their research showed that Americans have changed the way they view wildlife over time from something they need to dominate to something with which they need to live cooperatively.
- Once The Truth understood the general audience, they needed to consider how a brand could inform a strategy and help the organization achieve its objectives and goals. The Truth is refining the brand through videos, photography, typography, and other storytelling devices to talk about shared experiences in the outdoors. The NWTF brand is meant to document and promote a lifestyle that appeals to a broader audience.
- The Truth is now working on updating the NWTF website. The website is an integral medium through which people become familiar with NWTF as an organization. They are optimizing the website by thinking through the ways people navigate the website. They are also using data to strategically place storytelling devices and optimize Google searches.

- The Truth is creating videos and images to develop content for YouTube, Instagram, and other social media platforms. They are also considering how a content studio could work within NWTF to generate content with different parties internally and externally.
- Outreach and funding are important components of the NWTF brand. The NWTF's methods for fundraising include their banquets and national convention. Throughout the year, the NWTF also conducts fieldwork and other activities that bring people together. The Truth developed a list of tools and events for chapters across the United States to increase awareness. The Truth also organized the events based on whether the goal of the event is to raise funding or to increase outreach and morale.
- With every project, The Truth goes through a planning process to ensure they are ready to take an organization to market. Overall, The Truth takes a holistic approach. They develop messages and then integrate those messages into the operations and media of an organization to communicate a clear and consistent message.

Clarifying Questions

Meeting participants asked several clarifying questions about The Truth. Questions are indicated in italics with corresponding answers in plain text.

RMRI and restoration are large topics, and some RMRI subcommittees are creating focused messages on subjects like making communities wildfire ready. Has The Truth thought about a simple message for RMRI to reach the general public?

- The Truth is in the earliest stages of message development, and most of what they know about RMRI is from the website. A potential messaging strategy could be to focus on the relationship between living in forests and the idea that forest fires are natural. The message should bring people together and inspire a sense of obligation that comes from living in the forest. The messaging strategy is not a recommendation but an initial assessment based on current understanding.
- Members of The Truth who live part-time in Colorado are sensitive to the different perspectives on forest fires across the nation. One advantage of The Truth is that they have members who live across the United States and can bring those different perspectives when developing the messaging strategy. The messaging needs to talk to audiences in a relatable way. The Truth will talk to people internally and externally through focus groups and conduct consumer research to better understand the different perspectives and integrate them into the messaging strategy.
- The Truth has a process, and they can create a roadmap with checkpoints on how to develop key messaging and then roll it out. The Truth adapts their process to the individual needs of each client. The Truth also has a wealth of experience and skills in building a brand.

RMRI is composed of many partners. How can RMRI create one brand or idea for RMRI partners to rally behind and empower partners to carry RMRI messages forward?

- The strategy for getting buy-in varies. A common theme for getting buy-in is to involve people early, let them know what is happening, allow them to be a part of the creation process, and give them status reports. Partners are assumed to be a partner because they have some interest in the mission of an organization. Partners are generally not interested in developing their own communication material. So, if the messaging is good, partners will generally use it. Sometimes partners will take generated content directly, and sometimes they will adapt it to their local conditions.
- Every marketing and branding project has some buy-in issues. With the NWTF branding project, there was skepticism from different parties on the re-branding effort. The Truth

communicated with members of the NWTF and took suggestions as well to develop messaging that connected to members at all levels of the NWTF.

What kind of information or metrics might be helpful to grow the RMRI audience and achieve our shared objectives, specifically in Colorado or among our RMRI targeted audience?

The Truth Presentation Discussion

Meeting participants discussed The Truth presentation. Their comments are summarized below.

- The fact that members of The Truth live part-time in Colorado is favorable as they have seen the firsthand impact of fire and insect infestation on forest health.
- All subcommittees will need support from The Truth. The Social License Subcommittee is developing messages to build social license for certain types of treatments on National Forest and private lands. One of the tasks of the Communications Subcommittee is to develop messages and build the assets to support those messages. The Truth could participate in these meetings regularly. The Truth could also take the messaging or themes that the subcommittees provide and further develop those messages, create a mood board, test them with audiences, and then help build the creative assets.
- Matt Lindler, NWTF, will serve as the liaison between The Truth and the subcommittees.
- Having creative talent with a diverse background in marketing is an asset to building the RMRI brand.
- Making sure that RMRI partners are involved at the beginning of the branding effort will be key to its success.
- The Truth has expertise in research, focus groups, surveys, and working with multiple parties and audiences. Their research is some of the best research coming from a marketing firm, and they are great at creating content as well.
- As a third party, The Truth brings a non-biased approach to marketing and can see the issues with fresh eyes. They will have many topics to deal with, including commercial logging, biomass cleanup, increased traffic from moving products, prescribed fire, mastication, etc.
- The NWTF and USFS have a budget as part of their agreement. In that budget, there is funding for marketing and branding. The NWTF will pay for The Truth up front, and the USFS will match the contributions from the NWTF. Once that budget is exhausted, partners will need to fund the branding pieces that tie into their interests and concerns. There is enough funding in the budget to hire The Truth to develop the initial content and assessments of the different messaging. The Truth can bring RMRI to a point where they are self-sufficient. The NWTF then has graphic designers and an editor and producer on staff that can continue to make content. The NWTF also has a development department that could potentially identify funding sources depending on their capacity.

COMMUNICATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ACTION ITEMS UPDATE

Meeting participants provided updates on action items from their previous meeting. Their comments are summarized below.

- Matt Lindler, NWTF, Kelle Reynolds, USFS, and Rachel Franchina, USFS, have been putting together an extensive wish list for images and videos. The next step for the wish list is to have Communications Subcommittee participants review it, add other needed images, and provide images and videos when possible. Once the Subcommittee participants have started the process, they can take it to the larger RMRI group to fill it out more fully.
- Communications Subcommittee members should start capturing images of treatments in action that show the responsible use of equipment.

- Matt Lindler, NWTF, and Kelle Reynolds, USFS, have been working together to create a central depository of information. The Communications Subcommittee previously agreed that final documents would be on the website and that drafts will be edited on Google Docs. The Communications Subcommittee also needs a place where they can store assets that are not available to the public, like videography. Box is a good place to store these items because it is possible to restrict access and because the USFS staff can use it. Another option may be to use Flickr for photo sharing. Matt Lindler and Kelle Reynolds will create a Box folder for the Communications Subcommittee to add photographs and videos.
- It is possible to use stock photos for images and videos. However, it is also important to use photos that are from the priority landscapes and RMRI activities.
- The Social License Subcommittee is currently in the process of refining their key messages and defining their strategy to reach different audiences. The Social License Subcommittee is developing key messaging that they will send to the Communications Subcommittee and The Truth to help refine further.
- The Social License Subcommittee and Communications Subcommittee were once the same. The purpose of separating the two subcommittees was for the Communications Subcommittee to organize around RMRI branding and messaging for all RMRI efforts and for the Social License Subcommittee to develop messaging for local landscapes to build social license. Both subcommittees think about messaging and audience, so there is overlap between their two objectives. There may be an opportunity in the future to bring them together again.
- Participants on the May 1 RMRI call were supportive of the work of the Communications Subcommittee. As the Communication Subcommittee moves forward, they should consider what they need from RMRI partners and prepare requests during RMRI partner meetings.
- RMRI-Southwest Colorado (RMRI-SW) recently received funding for its Environmental Impact Fund (EIF) initiative. The Communications Subcommittee should consider promoting that update to RMRI partners.
- The Biomass Utilization Subcommittee is also thinking through how to build opportunities for biomass energy, and they could develop messaging around that topic.
- The RMRI governance charter outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Communications Subcommittee. One of the most important roles of the Communications Subcommittee is creating a central message for RMRI partners to use and adapt to their local landscape. Another important role of the Subcommittee is to develop communication protocols and infrastructure to vet messaging. There were no additional roles and responsibilities identified for the Communications Subcommittee.

NEXT STEPS

Samuel Wallace, Peak Facilitation, will send a Doodle for the week of June 8.