What are the Questions You Should Ask?

What are the Stories that You Want (or Need) to Tell?
Finding the Compelling & Engaging Storylines

Who are You Sharing the Stories with?
Creating Conversations that are Targeted, Focused & Relevant

The first step in communicating our work is to consider the story. Every project has something unique and important to share. Budget and schedule constraints may present stumbling blocks and time allowed for projects may be shorter than we might like. Also, the site’s story may not be fully understood until sometime after we depart the field. However, taking the time to identify the specific piece that we want to reveal allows us to move easily to the next step and identify our target audience(s) for our story.

Who are You Sharing the Stories with?

By presupposing the most effective means of communication, cost consideration and aggressive scheduling have become the norm and challenge us to develop educational public outreach for our projects that results in a meaningful experience for all participants.

Consider this real-world proposal example:

"Public Outreach. CRM firm will organize several opportunities for the public to learn about the results of the data recovery investigations at Site 99XX123. These opportunities will include (1) a public open house scheduled during the latter half of the 99-week excavation period the specific timing of this event will be coordinated with the client and its ongoing activities), (2) a website that features information about the ongoing site investigations, (3) a public presentation at a local venue scheduled to coincide with the State Archaeology Month, and (4) preparation of a written article describing the investigations at Site 99XX123 for publication in the Journal of the State Archaeological Society."

Today, most archaeology in the U.S. is associated with a cultural resource management (CRM) or public archaeology project, and transportation agencies are responsible for a large portion of that work. The educational outreach programs that arise out of these projects demonstrate the possibilities there are to engage the public in conversations about archaeology. Cost and consideration of technological advancement have become the norm and challenge us to develop educational public outreach for our projects that results in a meaningful experience for all participants.

Cultural Resource Management’s Conversations with the Public

By presupposing the most effective means of communication without considering the audience or the method, we greatly reduce our chances of meaningful communication. Is this approach effective from a financial standpoint or a public engagement perspective?

The use of social media as a platform for information sharing has become standard practice. In the fourth annual American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) social media survey, 90 percent of the participating state departments of transportation (43 and the District of Columbia) are using social media for public engagement. This is made possible by the 90 percent of American adults with cell phones, of which 56 percent are smartphones, with tablet ownership on a huge upswing. For this reason, social media and mobile platforms offer a means to present instant, focused stories relevant to your audience and their lives.

Nearly all of us are now connected. We use Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram, Flickr, Storify, and Snapchat for text, picture, and micro-video sharing and can follow a multitude of blogs focused on our particular areas of interest.