Message Mapping: A Way to Convey Complex Messages
By Christine M. Palumbo, MBA, RD

Before Mapquest®, Google Maps™, and portable GPS systems, we had road maps to take us where we wanted to go. In fact, if you were planning a long trip, mapping services sent you a large map with your route highlighted in yellow. Today’s complex food and nutrition messages require a personalized “road map” to convey our points in a way that will resonate with audiences. The process of message mapping allows us to do that.

What is Message Mapping?
Originated about twenty years ago from AT&T research on how to uncover ways to help company spokespeople, companies today use message mapping to communicate more effectively. It’s a way to create a simple, visual context for delivering a clear hierarchy of messages that can be used across all communication mediums, not just raw information. Message maps are visuals to help you tell a compelling story, are based on message hierarchy, and help support conversations.

The Process
As you might guess, message mapping is a process. A group, ideally with eight to ten participants, constructs and labels units of information into a “map” during a four hour facilitator-led session. The size of the group helps to ensure efficiency and productivity. Too many more people and it is difficult to reach consensus. Too few and it is difficult to raise diverse opinions.

J. Adaire Putnam, a professional moderator and facilitator and President of Perspectives Research, works with corporations and public relations firms in developing message maps. She explains, “The power of the mapping process is that all key stakeholders are represented at the workshop. Also, the facilitator plays a key role in guiding the team, vetting the draft messages, and ensuring the session stays on track and is productive.”

First, a home base message is identified. Next, three to six key messages are developed, which may serve later as media sound bites or for central themes at a presentation. The remaining three tiers of the map highlight supporting information, or fact boxes, which add credibility and clarity to the key messages.

Ideally, you would engage an outside facilitator to map out your key messages when trying to communicate complex information. Putnam says an internal person may also serve as a facilitator if they are familiar with the process.

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This year’s Food & Nutrition Conference and Expo (FNCE) in Chicago is shaping up to be fantastic with two wonderful educational sessions on leadership and self-development. DBC is also hosting networking opportunities with the annual DBC Networking Breakfast and infamous Networking Reception. Please register for these events at www.dbconline.org. I want to thank Amy Lauer, Erin DeSimone and Barb Pyper for their tireless efforts to make this FNCE a memorable and successful event.

Get involved with DBC! If you would like to volunteer, we need help to staff the DPG Showcase booth on Monday and help at the reception or networking breakfast. What a terrific way to meet people and see if you would like to get more involved in DBC as an executive committee member. The nominating committee is seeking interested members to run for Chair-elect, Secretary and Nominating Committee for 2009-2010. Contact Sally Cummins Healy, MS, RD, CD and Kendrick Repko, MS, RD, LDN at dbc@quidnunc.net, if you are interested in running for these offices.

DBC is hosting networking opportunities throughout the United States. Read all about our fantastic group of Regional Networking Coordinators in this issue and contact Cheryl Toner, MS, RD at toner@cdtconsult.com if you are looking for an event in your area or if you have any suggestions for a networking event.

I would like to recognize and congratulate our 50 Year DBC Members:

- Maxine Taylor
- Ann Crowley
- Maxine Dereiko
- Joclyn Ezell
- Ruby Puckett
- Dorothy Rowe

Lastly I would like to congratulate DBC members who have received prestigious ADA awards:

**Marjorie Hulsizer Copher Award**
Judith L. Dodd, MS, RD, FADA, LDN

**Medallion Awards**
Robert Earl, MPH, RD, LD
Karmeen Kulkarni, MS, RD, CD, CDE, BC-ADM

**Consultation & Business Practice**
Linda McDonald, MS, RD, LD

I look forward to seeing you in Chicago!

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**CALLING ALL NOMINEES!**

DBC is seeking candidates for the 2009 Officers and Committee Chairs election. Join other DBC members who are passionate about their work and the future of dietetics.

Get involved! Serving on the board is a great way to have input in the decisions that affect the direction of DBC. The following positions are open for nominees; terms begin June 2009:

- Chair-elect
- Secretary
- Nominating Committee

Detailed job descriptions are posted on the DBC Web site members-only section.

If interested, contact Kendrick Repko (Kendrick.repko@stopandshop.com, 781-380-5627) or Sally Cummins Healy (Sally.Cummins@edelman.com, 312-297-7598) by **November 1, 2008**.
The Importance of Networking

By Jennifer Seyler, MS, RD, Contributing Editor, DBC Dimensions

Networking, an act of connecting and staying connected with friends, co-workers, employers, basically, anyone you have met, can enhance your career or personal life — but only if the network is frequently used and kept up-to-date.

Many online tools, such as LinkedIn, Plaxo, or even Facebook, allow us to keep track of, learn more about, stay up-to-date on, and easily communicate with those we have met and want to stay connected.

If you think it is too late, think again. Even if you don’t have an online tool, you still have an ongoing network foundation that started long before now.

Before we realize it, we enter into networks of relationships that begin to form with our parents, friends, schoolteachers, coaches, church communities, etc. Gradually, these networks become our own and expand to include college friends and professors, co-workers and acquaintances, shared friends, and so on. Additionally, when you are active in the community, such as through volunteer work or charity organizations, you are exposed to even more networking opportunities.

There are many benefits to having a well-developed network. A network can help provide you with a “safety net” in time of need, such as job transitions, or a database of resources to form partnerships, suggest joint collaborations.

A good network takes effort, in regard to maintenance of your profile and existing relationships, as well as continually looking for others to connect.

Staying in contact and up-to-date with your information and contacts is essential. Sometimes, an occasional phone call or email will suffice. Other times, it may be more beneficial to arrange a face-to-face meeting, such as grabbing coffee or lunch.

As dietitians, we have many career options and the ability to develop our own job descriptions. It is a matter of asking questions, speaking with those with more experience, letting others know who you are and getting to know others, basically building a network — a database of resources.

My career in dietetics started traditionally, but through previous networking, I gained a variety of mentors and long-standing friends who I was able to call upon for advice and direction on how to transition into the field of Public Relations.

More than three years has passed since I changed careers and I continue to build my network. Not only have I benefited from these relationships, but I have also been able to provide my network with freelance opportunities, exposure to new positions and spokesperson activities.

A sound network helps create balance, a give and take that benefits all.

Takeaway message: Meet people – Stay connected – Call upon your network.

Jennifer Seyler, MS, RD, is an account supervisor at Current Lifestyle Marketing, a public relations agency that specializes in food and beverage clients. She can be reached at jseylernutrition@hotmail.com or 312-929-0507.

Your Meal Makeover Moms Web site has been a great success. You now have radio podcasts. Tell us about them.

My podcast, Cooking with the Moms, is a weekly 20-minute show featuring recipes and tips designed to help busy families eat a healthier diet. My Cooking with the Moms co-host is fellow dietitian, Janice Newell Bissex, MS, RD. Janice and I co-wrote The Moms’ Guide to Meal Makeovers (Broadway Books) and created www.Mea lMakeoverMoms.com together. Each week on the show, we tackle a different topic. We launched the podcast in May 2008, and some of our shows include Lunchbox Makeovers, Veggies Kids Love, Sensational Smoothies, and Healthy Grilling. Our podcast can be found on our Web site as well as on iTunes under the Kids & Family category.

What prompted you to launch your podcast?

My number one goal is to help fellow moms (and dads) feed their families better. Let’s face it: Many of today’s kids consume diets brimming with way too many processed foods and not nearly enough fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and other good-for-you foods. There is a lot of information out there – from Web sites to TV cooking shows, to magazine articles – yet parents are still confused about what to put on the table. As a dietitian and a mom, I have a lot of great information to share, and the podcast seemed like the perfect vehicle for delivering that information. Also, given that podcasts are a new, cutting-edge technology, it made sense to jump on the bandwagon early.

What kinds of information can people find on your Web site?

My Web site, www.Mea lMakeoverMoms.com, is designed as a resource for parents and caregivers. The site features recipes (all have been mom tested and kid approved), a “Meal Makeover Moms’ Blog” that we post to weekly, over 40 cooking and mealtime tips videos, our Cooking with the Moms radio podcast, nutrition articles and fact sheets, a supermarket shopping list, a “Recipe Reviewer Chart” that parents can use to encourage their picky eaters to try new foods, our Meal Makeover Moms’ Newsletter (we send it out to Club members bi-monthly), and information on our cookbook. There is also more on my online community so be sure to check out the site.

You have been working the area of communications for many years, what has changed?

I have been working in the area of communications since 1987 when I landed a job at CNN as an associate producer for the daily Nutrition News segment and weekend show, On the Menu, hosted by award-winning journalist, mentor, author, and DBC member, Carolyn O’Neil, MS, RD. Since then, I have seen the role of dietitians in business and industry grow. The one thing that surprises me the most is how far we have come and how diverse our roles have become.

What do you feel are critical issues facing registered dietitians working in business?

That is a tough question. Given the state of today’s economy, some RDs may feel the pinch, but hopefully just for the short term.

In our ever-changing field, what changes do you predict in dietetics over the next few years?

As business leaders continue to recognize what dietitians bring to the table, I suspect we will see an ever-growing role of the dietitian in industry. I also think we will see more and more business interactions taking place virtually, via the internet, and using technologies such as webinars, podcasts, webcasts, and more.

What do you see as the biggest challenge to dietitians starting out in business and communications?

I think the biggest challenge for dietitians entering the arena of business and industry is to set a goal and to then pursue that goal. I often hear from dietetics students and dietitians new to the field who tell me they want to get into communications. The first thing I ask them is, “What is your dream job?” By knowing where you want to go, it is easier to chart your course.

What advice can you offer to dietitians who chose business and communications for their career path?

Network, network, network. Talk to dietitians in the field, get hands-on experience, and get involved in various practice groups. It may take months or even years to build relationships and a solid resume - and to land that “dream job” - so be patient! It is important to be flexible too. As your lifestyle changes – you may move to a new city, start a family, etc. – your idea of the “best job ever” may change.

Interview by Jill R. Parker, MS, RD, LD; Contributing Editor, DBC Dimensions
Positioning Yourself as a Dietitian in Business: The Skills Dietetic Professionals Must Have to be Successful

By Jennifer Carlson, Dietetic Intern, University of Maryland College Park Department of Nutrition and Food Science Dietetic Internship

Excerpts from a presentation by Marsha Diamond, MA, RD, Executive Director, Foodservice Institute of America www.fia-us.org on February 11, 2008 to 56 Maryland and Virginia Dietetic Interns at the National Agricultural Library’s Food and Nutrition Information Center

The world of dietetics is rapidly evolving and the options are limitless. It is possible for registered dietitians (RD) to be successful in the business world. However, an RD must re-frame traditional thinking and think “outside the box”. For a registered dietitian to be most successful in the business world, one must allow their line of thinking outside of the traditional clinical mindset. The dietitian of today who can think openly about the role of food and health in today’s society, re-define career objectives and continuously seek out opportunities to build a strong skill set, will find success in unique places.

Currently, working a job can oftentimes mean supplying a product. Learn to sell yourself to potential employers in order to highlight your own personal desire, abilities, temperament and the assets that you can bring to the company. While education, experience and endorsements are still important, today it more important than ever to continually learn new skills and refine your own areas of expertise. New skills could relate to sales, marketing, PR, communication, innovation, management, whatever it may be, continue to build that unique skill set. By taking advantage of training opportunities and new experiences that arise, you are challenging yourself and broadening your horizons.

Viewing each experience as an opportunity, not just a job, will empower dietitians to learn new skills and absorb as much information as possible. Take advantage of the people and resources that surround you. Each individual you come in contact will possess different skill sets, knowledge and life experience. Know where to go for information and ask questions. Understand the big picture of the industry and the organizational goals of your business.

It is not enough to just do your job well; you must understand the other jobs around you and how they relate to the big picture. Be a risk taker! Be willing to try a new project that may not seem related to traditional dietetics. The knowledge possessed by a registered dietitian can be applied in many areas so do not be afraid to share your expertise!

Specific Skills Needed for Success in Business and Industry include:

- Choose training opportunities beyond “traditional” nutrition in marketing, communication, public speaking, advertising, training and sales.
- Develop management skills – managing people, budgets (especially profit and loss/P&L) and projects. Combine strong analytical and interpersonal skills.

“...an RD must reframe traditional thinking...”

- Know what you don’t know.
- Study and understand your business and how your job fits into the big picture.
- Actively promote your company as a major shareholder.
- Be willing to travel 25 to 50% of the time.
- Become a risk taker!
- Display some humor as the business world is different from the hospital.
- Network, network, network.
But she warns that the facilitator should not be so familiar with the material being mapped that s(he) loses objectivity and becomes a participant in the session.

**Utilizing message mapping**

Message mapping provides a handy reference tool for those who must respond to questions that require accuracy and timeliness, such as in public relations. Wendy Weiss, MA, RD, a New York City-based Nutrition Specialist with Ketchum, uses message mapping “to refine message points to set clients and products apart from the competition.” She adds that dietitians and DTRs working in settings other than public relations can use message mapping to “help write marketing materials, Web sites, brochures with clear points and compelling statements to put their best foot forward.” Ketchum ranks among the largest global public relations agencies and has long been noted as a leader in food, wellness and nutrition marketing.

Yet messages are not necessarily educational. Dietitians in patient education and clinical settings often think they are one and the same. Message maps are designed to frame thinking and organize information for sharing. Education happens when information is used and incorporated in multiple settings involving multi-sensory tactics. While the two are very complimentary and should work together, one does not replace the other.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has developed articles that describe the process for effective crisis communication that can be translated into other topics. For more information, see [http://www.epa.gov/nhsr/news/news040207.html](http://www.epa.gov/nhsr/news/news040207.html) and [http://www.epa.gov/nrmrl/news/news012006.html](http://www.epa.gov/nrmrl/news/news012006.html)

**A Powerful Tool for DBC Members**

Message mapping is a proven tool that brings disparate thoughts and groups to a point of clarity and ownership of a single set of messages for all to use. And they’re not only for developing media messages. Dietitians and dietetic technicians can use the technique when communicating consistent and core messages and complex information to clients, patients, legislators and other audiences.

According to Weiss, “Clinical dietitians always need to promote themselves as the nutrition expert. As such, they need to have a hand in writing any marketing materials developed for their hospital, affiliation and practice.”

To see a visual on the message mapping process, Putnam developed the PowerPoint slides on page 7.

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**Message mapping:**

A powerful tool that can be used to:

- Guide public relations efforts
- Help train spokespeople
- Educate internal and sales staff
- Build Web sites
- Create fact sheets and brochures
- Inform marketing and communications specialists
- Structure meetings

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*Christine M. Palumbo is a nutrition communicator in suburban Chicago. She pens “Food News” for Allure magazine, “Good Sense Eating” for Chicago Parent and also writes for FoodFit.com and Health. Christine speaks on communications topics to dietetic and other organizations. She serves on the ADA Board of Directors as a Director-at-Large. Christine can be reached at 630-369-8495 and at info@ChristinePalumbo.com.*
Message Mapping Process

**How It Works**

- **Payoff: Why us?**
- **Landscape: Challenge and/or Opportunity**
- **Home Base Message**
- **Support: How**
- **Support: Our Response to Landscape**

**Message Mapping at Work**

- **Good storytelling = Successful Communication**
- **Communication often Undisciplined: unfocused, unclear Inconsistent communication and unsuccessful**
- **Simple, visual structure Supports persuasive conversations**
- **We need to tell compelling stories**
- **Message maps help us do that**

Reference: J. Adaire Putnam, President of Perspectives Research
Networking is one of the most often uttered words in business vernacular. In fact, while it originated in business circles, networking has become a necessary function for most professional careers. Beyond career maneuvers, networking meets a real need that we all share for personal connection. The business world is increasingly global and virtual. But we still respond, perhaps even more profoundly than in the past, to a hand shake, eye contact, a shared meal. Our Regional Networking Coordinators (RNCs) make it happen for DBC members!

First of all, introductions are in order. Visit http://dbconline.org/about/officers/index.asp to read about these amazing DBC members who are strengthening DBC at its roots. They are:

- Allison Beadle, Austin
- Peggy O’Shea Kochenbach, Boston
- Laura Walsh, Chicago
- Sylvia Meléndez-Klinger, Chicago
- Tiffany Wenzel, Dallas/Fort Worth (as of August 2008)
- Andrea Carrothers, Denver (as of June 2008)
- Ellen Augur, Houston
- Alicia Baird, Minneapolis
- Elisabeth (Liz) D’Alto, New York
- Cathy D’Orazio, Philadelphia
- Lisa Katic, Washington, DC

This list of RNCs has grown and evolved over the past year. The positions formerly known as Geographic Representatives were already successfully centered in metropolitan areas with significant DBC membership. In 2007, we entered into an experiment in flexibility, with the aim of meeting member needs throughout the country more effectively. Two members now share the Chicago region as co-RNCs. Two Texas members extended the concept to an entire state, focusing collaboration at the Texas Dietetic Association annual meeting, while holding local meetings in their respective cities. And a new position was formed in Denver for the coming year, where a member simply had the initiative to bring networking opportunities to her significant, though relatively smaller, regional DBC membership.

Networking events around the country have ranged from educational events to gourmet adventures to pure networking. The RNCs get to know and plan events that work for the local members. Here are just a few examples:

In Boston, Peggy O’Shea Kochenbach has led DBC members in partnering with the Boston area Nutrition Entrepreneurs DPG members for many years to host networking and educational events. In April 2008, they featured three amazing speakers who work in food, nutrition, and health care.

In New York City, dinners are a big hit at restaurants such as Punch and Primitivo. Attendance ranges from about 10 to 20 people at all levels of experience and with many different types of expertise, including business, private practice, and media. (photo [NYC Event May 2008], from left to right: Rachel Meltzer Warren, Bernice Borow, Jaime Schwartz, Ellie Krieger, Liz D’Alto, Jessica Fishman, Karen Ferries)

At one dinner, members sat at three separate tables and switched for the third course to mix up the mingling. NYC events have been described as:

…a wonderful opportunity to connect with and be inspired by other members and to gain a sense of community within the big city and the national dietetic organizations. (Ellie Krieger, MS, RD)

The lively Chicago group meets on a quarterly basis in various regions throughout the area in order to encourage participation from as many members as possible. Plans for the future include extending invitations to colleagues in nutrition and related fields who are not yet ADA or DBC members to join the events. One Chicago DBC member had this to say about a recent event:

Just wanted to say “thank you” for hosting the June 4th DBC DPG Potluck Dinner. It

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wa sa nice even ing, with delicious food & beverages, and I was pleased to meet several new DBC members from the Chicago area. Thanks for all your efforts in planning the event, it was great! (Susan DuPraw, MPH, RD)

Ellen Augur and Allison Beadle answered the call to bring DBC to life in Texas. Based in Austin and Houston, the two worked together to plan a networking reception during the Texas Dietetic Association annual meeting in April, just about a month after getting started in their new roles. Clearly the phrase, “take the bull by the horns,” originated in Texas!

Alicia Baird in Minneapolis has found that members in her region like to network, pure and simple, over coffee or lunch. Even the bitter cold could not keep a handful of dedicated DBC members away from a Saturday morning event in January!

Quite a buzz has been created “inside the beltway” by Lisa Katic. DC is a “small” community, so word spread quickly after the successful lunch event in March. In June, Kraft Foods, Inc graciously provided a beautiful meeting space and secured a speaker from a Washington, DC lobbyist to provide an overview of the current Farm Bill.

Lisa led the way in surveying the DC members via Survey Monkey. Now also utilized in Minneapolis and Texas, these results have been helpful in planning meeting structure, and speaker topic for events in these regions.

What does the future hold? With this group of Regional Networking Coordinators, DBC is growing in a new and exciting way. Economic realities will likely be a challenge for membership numbers in most professional organizations. The RNCs, however, bring value to DBC members in a tangible, personal way. Networking once a year at FNCE is fabulous. Connecting with DBC members and friends of DBC at the local level throughout the year adds a layer of richness to those connections, and creates entirely separate opportunities. With the innovation that we are seeing in how DBC connects people, the return on your member dollars will only continue to increase.

This fall, look out for a wine event in the DC area, Denver's and Philadelphia's first networking events, and a "Walk and Talk" through the St Paul/ Minneapolis skyways. Expect higher visibility at the national level, such as at DBC's FNCE events, for these exciting RNC efforts. Most importantly, consider ways in which you can create meaningful opportunities for the food and nutrition professionals who work in business or communications in your community to connect with, learn from, and inspire one another.

Cheryl Toner, MS, RD is Chair of the DBC RNCs and is owner and president of CDT Consulting, LLC, which offers food and health communications and strategy. Contact Cheryl at toner@cdtconsult.com
**Dr. Joanne Lichten, PhD, RD • Orlando, FL**

Dr. Jo (Joanne Lichten, PhD, RD) has recently completed media tours for Trident Splash and Sunbelt Snacks and relocated to Orlando, Florida. She is also busy with speaking engagements for The American Association of Food Stamp Directors, Promotional Products Association, and Girl Talk 4 Women Conference. Her latest product, “Dr. Jo’s Eat Out & Lose Weight Plan”, with tips, strategies, and restaurant menu suggestions, was recently released as a 30-piece, UV coated wallet card set. You can view products and services and sign up for her eNewsletters at [www.drjo.com](http://www.drjo.com).

**Marjorie Geiser, RD, NSCA-CPT • Running Springs, CA**


**Mary Ann Hodorowicz, RD, LDN, MBA, CDE • Palos Heights, IL**

Mary Ann Hodorowicz, RD, LDN, MBA, CDE owns Mary Ann Hodorowicz Consulting, LLC, specializing in nutrition, health promotion, diabetes education and insurance reimbursement for the healthcare and food industries. Hodorowicz assists healthcare entities establish medical nutrition therapy and diabetes self-management education programs and lends her expertise to healthcare corporations, researchers, food product companies, pharmacy chains, education and training firms, and academia. She also assists RDs with building their MNT and DSME private practices. Mary Ann has self-published three resources for professionals - a DSME and MNT reimbursement manual, another for establishing a successful MNT program, and electronic MNT and DSME forms. She also offers presentations and CEU workshops and serves on numerous tasks forces and committees, including two ADA committees. To find out more go to: [www.maryannahodorowicz.com](http://www.maryannahodorowicz.com).

**Dr. Wolf J. Rinke, RD, CSP • Clarksville, MD**

Dr. Wolf J. Rinke, RD, CSP is president and founder of Wolf Rinke Associates, Inc., a human resource development and management consulting company that custom designs and delivers stimulating and informative keynote presentations, interactive problem solving funshops and highly effective consulting, coaching and educational services. He is the president of [www.easyCPEcredits.com](http://www.easyCPEcredits.com), an accredited provider of home-study courses for nutrition professionals. In addition to being a media personality that has been featured on CNN and over 300 other TV and radio shows, Wolf is a Certified Speaking Professional (a credential earned by fewer than 500 speakers worldwide) and has delivered close to 1,000 presentations in 13 countries. He is a widely published author of audio and video programs and bestselling books, including *MAKE It a Winning Life: Success Strategies for Life, Love, and Business*, *Winning Management: 6 Fail-Safe Strategies for Building High-Performance Organizations* and *Don’t Oil the Squeaky Wheel and 19 Other Contrarian Ways to Improve Your Leadership Effectiveness*. He has been ranked by Executive Excellence among “the top 100 minds” in the field of personal leadership development along with Tom Peters, Oprah Winfrey, and Stephen Covey. Check out his website at [www.WolfRinke.com](http://www.WolfRinke.com).
• First, New York banned trans fat from restaurant foods (unless they’re prepackaged and fully labeled). Now this summer, calorie labeling on menu boards went into effect in New York City. While as nutrition professionals, we are well aware of the rising rates of obesity in the US, as well as the negative health implications of trans fat, what’s most compelling is that New York has no plans in place to assess whether these new laws actually have an impact on health outcomes. The Nutrition Facts Panel has been around since 1994, but obesity rates are higher than ever, proving that information alone doesn’t motivate individuals to change their behavior. So suddenly, posting calorie levels in chain restaurants will motivate people to make healthier choices when eating out? It seems that before cities, states and counties across the US pass more laws related to nutrition posting in restaurants, we need to understand if it really is effective in changing behavior.

• While at The Organic Summit in Boulder, Colorado, the dichotomy of what’s going on in our food system struck me. We have consumers demanding more organic, natural, fair trade and locally grown. Community Supported Agriculture options are cropping up everywhere. We have momentum to bring back the small and midsize family farm. Consumers are looking for authenticity and transparency about the foods they eat. At the other end of the spectrum, we have the explosion of text messaging and with it, less personal interaction. We have materialism, new technologies blasting at us, a global economy and flat world. The complexities of our lives has dramatically increased. My question is – where do these two trends converge? Do they? Are the same consumers driving both?

• If you’re looking for a good read, try *Now, Discover Your Strengths* by Marcus Buckingham and Donald Clifton (The Free Press 2001). It’s not new in the marketplace by any means, but it’s ideal for dietitians who have been in the profession for some time and may be looking to take a next twist or turn in their career. It puts the perspective on your signature strengths – definitely refreshing in response to so many work cultures that drive you to work on your developmental opportunities instead of soaring with your strengths.

• In July, the National Restaurant Association, amongst others, sponsored the “Nutrient Essentials: Sodium and the Healthy Plate” conference. This debated topic is bound to get hotter as some try to drive home the focus on sodium’s impact on blood pressure which, in turn, has an impact on heart disease. An intriguing piece of data presented at the conference was that, like so many other nutrients, sodium intake is directly related to calorie consumption. As calorie intake has gone up over the past thirty years, so has sodium intake. The proportion of sodium Americans consume, however, has not increased. As health professionals, it seems like dietitians need to stand up and drive the agenda for a focused, understandable message – limiting calories, cutting back on portion size, whole foods. After all, consumers don’t eat nutrients, they eat foods.

*Topline is a column by DBC member Annette Maggi, MS, RD, LD, FADA. IF you have an idea for Topline send an email to Annette.Maggi@target.com*
Please note: This is a two part article. The second installment will be in the Winter 2008 issue of DBC Dimensions

How can you become one of the dietitians you see on TV or interviewed in a magazine? While luck does play a role, more often it’s equal parts persistence and knowledge of how the media works. Read on for some of the secrets—straight from the people who know.

I’ve been a media spokesperson for eight years. But I remember how hard it was to get started. Going out and actually asking for bookings may seem crazy. After all, if they wanted you, they’d come after you, right?

Wrong. Over the course of many media bookings, I gained great insight into how the media actually works. I also realized how much dietitians needed this information! So, I went out and talked to media experts—all of whom book dietitians—to find out how dietitians can get booked for media opportunities.

You may be surprised to know that every person I interviewed emphasized how wonderful it is when someone pitches them with story ideas. Although some do require media experience, many are also willing to take a chance on a newcomer with no experience. So how do you pitch someone in the media?

First things First: Go Local All the producers interviewed said the same thing: if you don’t have experience, start local. Dana Ross, a freelance television and video health producer and former producer for Discovery Health, started her career working in local news for a wire service in Chicago. If you don’t know, a wire service puts out stories every day—broken up into ‘beats’. There’s the police beat, the court beat, and so forth. Ross covered the health and hospital beat. “So that meant that every day I had to write an article on something interesting to do with health and hospitals in Chicago. Something that people in Chicago would want to know about…and since I wrote a story every day, I was often desperate for topics. I would often contact area hospitals for sources I could interview and ideas for stories.”

Ross goes on to say that she would have “loved it” if an RD had contacted her with story ideas. “You’re so busy trying to get stories done that if someone comes to you with a story idea and they have some experience with it and are willing to be interviewed, it’s so great. It just makes your job so much easier.” Ross also stresses what a great opportunity it is for dietitians who live outside of major cities to get media experience.

When asked about how a dietitian can leverage opportunities close to home, Ross emphasizes the edge dietitians have as a part of the local community—an edge they should exploit in their pitches. “These media outlets don’t want national stories; rather, they’re looking for local topics of interest to the people in the areas they serve. For example, you want to know if there’s a local outbreak of meningitis, or if a local school district is trying an innovative weight loss program for students. These are the stories the local wire service wants to cover and what its audience wants to know about.”

Ross adds that the best way to find out about this is just by going to your local paper and finding out who covers that beat. “Look at the byline—you’ll see the name (and often the email) of the local reporter. Another option is the Web—it’s much easier to look at the paper’s website and find the names rather than calling. You can also search the paper online, so it’s faster and easier. Also, lots of times the websites of local publications will have the person’s name you’re looking for, and their email, with instructions to ‘contact them’. So, that makes it really easy.”

Brendan Anderer, a senior producer for HealthiNation (a health video-on-demand broadband company) and former producer at the Today show and MSNBC, agrees that local media is open to being pitched. “Those guys [on local news stations] scramble every day to get story ideas.” Anderer notes that it can be more difficult to find out who the producer is because—unlike print media—there’s no byline

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and no author. “But if you do some digging and then reach out to that person, you can increase your odds of getting some local TV experience, which can help you later get booked nationally.”

This is particularly true if you’re flexible—for example, if you’re willing to work weekends or early mornings. As Anderer notes, “The morning [local] news shows [that are on] before the national news shows—you know, like Good Morning America or the Today show—are a great place to go. You have to get up really early, but they’re looking for good ideas, and again, it all goes back to the local story. Local news is good when it’s truly local.”

Anderer also suggests partnerships with public relations firms as something to consider. In larger metropolitan areas, fitness centers, restaurants and supermarkets often have PR firms repping them. Producers are likely to call these firms when they’re producing a health segment, and if you’re affiliated with them, it could end up getting you a gig. “I’ve often called PR agencies that rep gyms looking for people for segments. If they have a nutritionist on staff or on their roster, I will definitely be interested in booking him or her for a segment.”

At the end of the day, Anderer stresses the importance of going for it. “Pitch, pitch, pitch, pitch, pitch. If you’re a producer or journalist scrambling to find stories each day, if someone comes to you with something interesting that makes your job easier, you’re so much more likely to work with them. Even if some of the ideas don’t work out initially, if you continue to pitch eventually there will be something they’ll be interested in.”

In part two of the article, find out how to come up with story ideas, getting experience and the importance of reaching out to your network.

Sheila Kelly, MS, RD is the president of Skelly Publishing, a provider of continuing education and practice resources for RDs. This article was adapted from the Skelly Publishing 14-CPE publication Booking and Acing Media Opportunities: A Dietitian’s Guide to Success in the Spotlight (2008). Visit Skelly Publishing at: www.skellypublishing.com. Contact Sheila at Sheila@skellypublishing.com.
As technology advances and becomes a normal part of our lives, we as registered dietitians must take advantage of new technology to advance ourselves professionally. There are many mediums with which to do this such as podcasts or blogs, but one of the most feasible is to create a web page. Many dietitians have already recognized the importance of having a web page and what it brings to their careers, so there is no reason for all of us not to jump at the same opportunity. Even if you do not necessarily have products or services to sell, a web page is still great exposure and an excellent way to market yourself – you never know what may come your way because someone happened upon on your web page. How to get started? Read on!

What is the goal of my web page?
This is possibly the most important question to answer before you begin to create a web page. A clear picture of what you would like to accomplish with your page is vital. Do you have a product or service you would like to sell? Do you just want to gain exposure and market yourself? As with anything, in order for your page to achieve the results you hope for, you must know what you would like those results to be.

Who is my target audience?
Just as with your goal, you want a clear picture of who you are targeting. Are you targeting individuals looking for a dietitian for diet counseling? Are you targeting publishers for freelance opportunities? A good vision of who you would like to benefit from your page is going to help you attain the outcomes you desire.

What do I want to be included on my web page?
Deciding what to include in your web page is the next major step in your plan. Do you want your web page to showcase educational materials you have developed? Do you want your web page to contain clips of articles you have written? The possibilities are endless here. Your creativity comes into play at this point. By choosing a design and content that connects with your target audience, you ensure your page is on its way to meeting your expectations.

What level of technology do I want in my web page?
Answering this question is an important part of the effect of your web page on you. For example, do you want to develop the page yourself and how much maintenance do you wish to put into your page? As with the content of your page, your options abound when it comes to what level of technology you wish your page to have. Do you want your page to include basic links? Do you want your page to be interactive? Do you want your page to be linked to your podcasts or blogs? All of these things will determine how technologically savvy either you or those you choose to help you need to be in order to make the page do exactly what you would like for it to do.

Do I want to create and maintain my page myself, or do I want to hire someone else to do this?
Once you have decided what you want, the next step is to decide how to bring your vision to fruition. If you are technologically inclined, or have someone close to you who is, maybe you wish to create the page yourself using various software and programs available. Or, you may want to consider hiring someone to develop and host your page. Remember to consider the cost involved with hiring someone – if you choose to hire someone, how much do you want to spend for your page’s creation and maintenance? Do you have any avenues available to you to help defray any of this cost? If you do the page yourself, utilize your resources. What has been successful for other dietitians with web pages? Does anyone recommend a particular company over another?

How much time do I want to devote to the maintenance of my web page?
This question is key, because how well you maintain your page determines how successful it will be. If you tell your visitors you will post weekly blogs to your page, but only have time to add a blog every two months, this leaves a poor impression. Figure out how much time you are willing to commit to your web page and when you state you are going to provide a service, follow through. Your visitors or potential clients will be pleased and you will be proud of your accomplishments and most importantly of your web page!
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Networking Reception
Saturday, October 25
6:30 pm to 9:00 pm
Chicago Firehouse
1401 South Michigan Avenue
Join us for awesome food, fun, music
and networking after the FNCE opening
session! See old friends or meet
contacts and enjoy appetizers and
cocktails. The first drink is compliments
of DBC, followed by a cash bar.
Attire is business casual.

DBC Educational Sessions
Sunday, October 26 • 8:30 to 10:00 am**
McCormick Place West
Live Like You Mean It with Ellyn
Luros-Elson, RD and Ken Wasco
This is based on the motivational book
that will walk you through the process
of creating a meaningful, fulfilling and
happier life with results worthy of
legacy building.
**Join Ken and Ellyn for a
Meet the Author book signing in the
Expo Hall from 10:30am – 11:30am
10:30 am to 12:00 noon
From Practitioner to Manager: Developing
Your Leadership Profile. Jean Caton, MS,
MBA, RD and Mary Cluskey, PhD, RD
Mary and Jean will help you develop your
management and leadership image and
skills throughout your career to enhance
your opportunities for advancement to
lead more personally fulfilling and
financially rewarding careers.

DPG Showcase
Monday, October 27
10:30 am – 1:00 pm
McCormick Place West
Stop by our new exhibit booth to meet
the Movers and Shakers in Dietitians
in Business and Communications.
You can also sign up to become a
member and get a handy luggage tag.

DBC’s Networking Breakfast
Tuesday, October 28
6:45 am – 8:00 am
Hyatt Regency on Wacker
Join us to network with dietitians
in media, manufacturing, industry
consulting, foodservice distribution,
and many more out-of-the-RD box
opportunities. Highlights of the
morning will include the presentation
of DBC awards and feature events that
have occurred throughout the year.

Advance
Registration
Required at
dbconline.org

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