

# Required: Patience and persistence



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**L**ast month we discussed the need for a positive approach in dealing with the media to get our message out to the public and lawmakers. We explained why we benefit from having a calm and reasoned conversation about the Postal Service's actual financial situation.

Being positive is important—but it's not enough. When communicating our message, we also need to exhibit patience and persistence.

This applies in a host of ways. "The media" is shorthand for the thousands of national, regional, statewide, city and community newspapers, magazines, news websites and radio and television networks/stations that dot our landscape, churning out information (and misinformation).

There is no magic wand we can wave to inform all of them of the facts and ensure that they actually use the information. Rather, our effort is a labor-intensive, time-consuming one that involves locating the appropriate person/people in each media outlet, and then having constructive conversations or sending a commentary piece or whatever else is appropriate.

Each of these outlets, big and small, can help us achieve our goals. Yes, the *Wall Street Journal* or ABC News reach millions of people, but the curiosity of an influential member of Congress might be piqued by a thoughtful letter from one of his constituents to the editor of the lawmaker's hometown weekly.

Making so many contacts is a daunting task, but it's one that plays to our strength—which, of course, is you.

We have close to 300,000 members all across the country in every media market there is, and growing numbers of you are engaged in the task at hand. Our adversaries, be they USPS suits or hostile lawmakers, have at best a few flaks and pawns who can't match your knowledge or dedication.

So the more we expand the playing field, the harder it is for our adversaries to compete. They can try to rebut an op-ed piece we have in a national newspaper, but they can't counter the thousands of letters and commentary pieces and radio interviews you're responsible for around the country.

**Beyond the sheer number of media outlets, what tests our patience and persistence is the work involved in reshaping the reporting of any one of them. Calling an editor to complain about a misleading piece or even getting a letter in the paper are good starts, but we want to stay on top of their continuing coverage—to make sure they understand the issues, reach out to us for future news reports, and consider enterprise stories about the local impact of eliminating door-to-door or Saturday delivery.**

Here's an example: In mid-September, a prominent online

news site popular in the business, technology and investor communities ran a piece about Amazon and USPS depicting an agency losing billions of dollars because of the Internet and being thrown a lifeline by Amazon.

A lengthy conversation ensued with the reporter. He requested comments from President Rolando, who thoroughly explained USPS operating profitability, the unfair pre-funding mandate and the proper legislative approach.

The very next day, in early October, that reporter posted a story on Amazon, USPS and grocery deliveries that accurately portrayed USPS' challenges and prospects, cited "political rather than operational reasons" in explaining the red ink, and quoted just one person—President Rolando. The reporter subsequently said that his future reporting would refer to the context provided by NALC's president.

Before we regard this as a "mission accomplished" moment, there's a sequel. A week later, another reporter at the same outlet wrote a story on the same topic that belittled letter carriers supposedly idled by declining mail volume and thus seeking to deliver food items.

A conversation with that reporter's editor followed. He removed the offensive references, placed an editor's note to indicate that changes had been made, and agreed to speak to the reporter about the article's tone.

Given the outlet's far-flung nature, with freelance reporters located around the country, recasting its coverage of postal issues is an ongoing process.

**The stick-to-it-ness demonstrated by President Rolando is reflected in the efforts of so many NALC members, whether a retired letter carrier who has persuaded a Midwestern newspaper to give him a regular column on postal issues, a state president who has published letters in just about every newspaper in his state, another state president whose radio interviews have blanketed his state, Leadership Academy graduates translating their letter-to-the-editor exercises into action back home, and more.**

The can-do attitude and positive approach and yes, the patience and persistence that thousands of you are demonstrating, are essential to securing our future. And you are making great strides toward doing just that.

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