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**Home Care
& Hospice
Petition
Congress!**



The Three G's: Grassroots, Guerilla & Government

By Merrily Orsini



Reading through this month's issue, it is likely you are inspired and more aware of the legislative issues facing the home care and hospice industries for 2008. With the Medicare home health prospective payment system (PPS) undergoing its first major revision since its inception in October, 2000, it is possible that all aspects of your operations have been affected. Additionally, with this being an election year, our political leaders already have a packed agenda that will highlight issues facing the aging population which directly affect our ability to provide services.

It is more important than ever that those of you in the home care and hospice industry continue to make your voices heard. That is where the Three G's come in: Grassroots, Guerilla and Government. To keep your positions on issues reaching those in government who make the changes, focus on a grassroots, guerilla marketing campaign using the tools that are already in your pocket; your Web site and the Internet. To get more messages out, here are a variety of ways to use those handy tools:

■ **Home Pages are Highly Visible** – Your Web site home page is the front door of your organization and the first place customers, vendors, and competitors go to learn all about you.

Use this to your advantage and create banners, buttons and/or links on your home page to communicate and educate everyone about your position on various issues. That can be in a "Letter from the President" format or a link to your blog, making people aware that you are actively trying to present the impact of issues on your community, your patients, and your organization.

■ **Blog About It** – If you already have a company blog, this is a perfect vehicle to discuss your company's position on the issues. You can open up a blog to members of the community to share their responses to your pros and cons of how an issue or a proposed budget cut can impact people in your community. Patients' families who currently are receiving services or those who have in the past (think hospice) are great for this. Then their passion shows through rather than just yours. See if you can harness and share the passion. Your organization is simply educating on the impact, and then opening a forum that can be sent to legislators about what their constituents are thinking. Make certain YOUR passion for the issues shows through! Remember: be careful not

to disclose any patient's personal health information or situation when you're giving examples of how issues impact services.


- **Newsletter** – Send out a special legislative/issue edition of your e-newsletter. In a letter from a board member, and/or the president of medical staff, and/or someone influential in your community who's affiliated with your organization, you can share your position. Creating an education section linking to resources on learning about these issues or technology updates, and such, can help you empower your community to work for change. If you don't want to send out a special edition, make certain to include a letter from the editor or links to blog entries you have done pertaining to the issues.
- **Podcast** – If you've mastered podcasts or Webcasts and have a Web camera, record someone discussing the issues, or do a roundtable discussion with your management team. Broadcasting this on your Web site or your blog personalizes the issues by allowing people to see and/or hear exactly how the issue impacts real people from various perspectives.

■ **Discussion Forums/Message Boards** – Search the Internet for legislative issues about which you are most passionate. Your state and national associations are a good place to start, and there are other good sources to give you statistics and information to support your position. There will likely be some message boards or discussion forums popping up in the results of your search. Choose someone from your company who writes well and can communicate your position and make some posts. If you have created a Webcast or blog entry, link back to these in your posts.

Legislative changes always affect how your company does business. You can rely on your state and national associations to represent you well; however, they're the first to tell you that the basics of legislative changes come from the grassroots level. You, your clients and patients, and your community and constituents could have a powerful voice. Using these suggested techniques will go a long way to helping get that voice heard. Grassroots campaigns can be some of the most highly effective ways to create change, so use the tools available to you via the Web and join the cause.

About the Author: Merrily Orsini, MSSW, is managing director of corecubed, an integrated marketing communications company that specializes in home care and home health industries. Merrily has been active in internet marketing since 1990. She is an 18-year veteran of the private duty industry and currently serves on the Advisory Board of the Private Duty Homecare Association of America.

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