

## Summary — NARFE Marketing, Communications & Membership Growth

### Street Level Studio

#### 1. Overall Strategy

- Street Level Studio and BRG have partnered with NARFE for about two years to develop and implement an integrated marketing and communications strategy.
- The primary goal is **revenue growth**, which depends on:
  - Attracting more members.
  - Getting people to join earlier, particularly while they are active federal employees or early retirees.
  - Retaining members longer.
  - Exploring additional non-dues revenue and improving marketing efficiency.
- The strategy is a **continuous cycle**: implement tactics → measure results → analyze data → adjust tactics → reinvest in what works.

#### 2. Current Federal Employee Environment

- Monthly "pulse surveys" are being used to understand federal employees' attitudes and concerns.
- A July survey found that **57% said they were very unlikely to choose a federal career again**, illustrating the changing attitude toward federal service.
- The federal workforce is also smaller than in previous decades, creating a smaller pool of potential future members.
- Early retirement and changes in federal employment make it increasingly important to reach employees **before and during retirement**.

#### 3. Digital Marketing

- NARFE is using an **omnichannel marketing approach**, including:
  - Facebook and Instagram (Meta)
  - Google
  - Email
  - Digital display/video advertising
  - Print
  - Radio
  - Federal employee-focused publications and newsletters
  - Podcasts and influencers
- Reddit was initially successful for reaching federal employees but became less effective as advertising restrictions increased, so funds were shifted toward Meta.
- **Retargeting** is used to reach people who have already interacted with NARFE advertisements.
- Website visitors who reach membership-related pages are placed into an email "drip" campaign designed to gradually encourage them to join.
- Prospects are also passed to NARFE staff for additional follow-up.

#### 4. Repeated Exposure Matters

- Marketing now requires approximately **10–14 contacts** before someone is likely to respond, compared with the traditional six or seven.
- Because of limited budgets, campaigns need to concentrate spending rather than spread advertising too thinly.

- The objective is to create repeated exposure across several channels rather than relying on a single advertisement.

## 5. Advertising Results & Optimization

- Marketing staff continually monitor impressions, clicks, click-through rates and cost per click.
- From March 2025 through July 2026, the average cost per impression was reported at about **one cent**.
- Approximately **20,000 people reached the NARFE "Join Now" process** during 2026, although tracking currently stops when users enter the membership-processing system.
- NARFE is working to improve tracking so it can identify where potential members drop out and improve conversions.

## 6. AI and Meta Advertising

- Meta has introduced AI-driven advertising through its **Andromeda** system.
- NARFE is testing two approaches:
  - Manually selecting audiences.
  - Allowing Meta's AI to determine audiences and ad placement.
- Early testing produced roughly equivalent results, so both approaches are continuing to be tested before advertising dollars are shifted.

## 7. Retention Is Now a Major Focus

- Marketing has shifted some resources from acquiring new members toward **bringing back lapsed members**.
- A previous year's lapsed-member list is being used to create look-alike audiences and targeted "come back" messaging.
- A survey of lapsed and canceled members identified several important issues:
  - Some members did not understand or use their NARFE benefits.
  - Some considered membership too expensive.
  - Some did not feel NARFE was effectively advocating for them.
  - Some perceived NARFE as politically biased, despite its nonpartisan status.
- These findings are being incorporated into future advertising and messaging.

## 8. Open Season & Federation Campaigns

- The national Open Season campaign is scheduled to begin **September 15** and run through December 15.
- Federations are encouraged to participate in digital campaigns.
- Campaign spending varies considerably—from roughly \$1,500–\$2,500 in some states to more than \$10,000 in others.
- **Matching funds remain available**, potentially covering 50% of qualifying campaign costs when proper procedures are followed.
- Federations are encouraged to propose creative campaigns tailored to their local events and circumstances.

## 9. Grassroots Membership Programs

The presenters emphasized that paid advertising is only part of the strategy. Federations should also use:

- Open houses.

- Ambassador programs.
- Member-get-member campaigns.
- Active federal employee interest groups.
- Federal employee events and conferences.
- Community events and local outreach.
- Personal contacts and referrals.

California's active-employee HR group was cited as a pilot that could potentially be replicated elsewhere.

## **10. Public Relations & Earned Media**

BRG Communications handles NARFE's public relations and earned-media efforts.

The strategy has two tracks:

### **Always-on outreach**

- Maintain continuous contact with national, trade and local reporters.
- Look for opportunities to tell NARFE's story and highlight federal workforce issues.

### **Real-time response**

- Monitor breaking news affecting federal employees and retirees.
- Quickly provide NARFE representatives for interviews and commentary.

Since work began in October 2024, the campaign has generated **more than 4 billion media impressions**, according to the presentation.

## **11. Pulse Surveys as a PR Tool**

- Monthly surveys provide current data that can be used to generate news coverage.
- Topics include:
  - Whether federal employees feel appreciated.
  - Whether people would choose federal employment again.
  - Open Season.
  - Potential future government shutdowns.
- Survey data provides a fresh, credible element that can be added to media stories.

## **12. Local Media Opportunity**

- Federation presidents were encouraged to become more active with local media.
- Letters to the editor, local interviews, opinion pieces and commentary can extend NARFE's visibility.
- BRG can help federations identify appropriate media contacts and opportunities.
- Because earned media cannot be guaranteed, consistent outreach is necessary; stories can be displaced by breaking news even after an interview occurs.

## **13. Consistent NARFE Branding**

Federations and chapters were encouraged to use NARFE's established:

- Logo.
- Name and terminology.
- Presentation materials.
- Email/signature formats.
- Other branding resources.

The argument was that greater consistency makes NARFE appear more professional, organized and recognizable nationally.

## **14. Small Steps Can Produce Large Results**

A major message was **don't try to accomplish everything at once.**

Federations should:

- Give members small, manageable assignments.
- Try different outreach methods.
- Learn from unsuccessful efforts.
- Repeat and modify programs rather than abandoning them after one attempt.
- Use members' personal networks and community connections.

Examples included distributing brochures at conferences, volunteering at federal facilities, and using informal personal contacts to spread awareness.

### **15. Email + Phone Outreach**

The presenters strongly promoted an **email-and-phone combination ("email phonathon")**:

1. Send members/prospects an email.
2. Follow up with a phone call or voicemail.
3. Continue the process rather than relying on a single contact.

Even leaving a voicemail can prompt someone to notice the organization or revisit the email.

### **16. Social Media**

Federations and chapters were strongly encouraged to **share NARFE national social-media posts** on their own Facebook, LinkedIn and other channels.

The reasoning is that even a modest number of people sharing national content can dramatically expand its reach through their individual networks.

### **17. Benchmarking & Goals**

Federations were encouraged to establish measurable membership goals—for example:

- 10 new members.
- 50 new members.
- 100+ new members.

The important point is to establish a target so progress can actually be measured.

A possible **2027 organizational initiative** discussed was identifying one or two membership/marketing goals that could be adopted across all federations to create greater organizational alignment.

### **18. Key Takeaways for Federations**

**The central message was:**

**Grow membership, retain members longer, communicate repeatedly, measure everything, and continually adjust based on results.**

The presenters particularly emphasized:

- Reach active federal employees earlier.
- Make membership benefits clear.
- Strengthen retention efforts.
- Use both digital and grassroots marketing.
- Take advantage of matching funds.
- Participate in Open Season campaigns.
- Use local media.
- Share national social-media content.

- Hold open houses and ambassador programs.
- Establish measurable membership goals.
- Share successful ideas among federations.
- Think creatively and start with small, achievable actions.