

Collective Wisdom from the Atlas Network: “Ten Things That Helped My Institute Take Off”

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The think tank leaders in Atlas’s network represent a gold mine of “tried and true” information. I asked a handful of our leading partners to list the most fruitful things they did during the early years of their institute. What actions or programs helped more than others? What would you recommend to newcomers to the network?

I asked them to quickly jot down the first things that came to mind. In many cases, details about some of the programs mentioned can be found on the individual institute’s website. (You can always find the institute websites via the Atlas free market directory <http://www.atlasusa.org>.)

From the responses I received, I teased out several common themes that I believe cut across many cultures and provide important information for think tank leaders. For each theme, I offer a few overview comments, followed by specific comments from our international partners.

I’ve grouped the “nuggets of wisdom” as follows:

- Stick to your stated mission
- Maintain independence
- Position yourself strategically
 - Focus on Actions and Results
 - Create relationships with influential opinion-leaders and be sure they receive your products
 - Market the institute
 - Fundraise, fundraise, and fundraise!
- Take advantage of the network

As you read these words, please feel free to send me your comments or suggestions. I’d be happy to share them at my very next opportunity. You can reach me at jo@atlasusa.org.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MISSION – Stick to Your Stated Mission

Although I promised “brief overview comments,” let me spend a bit of time on this first aspect – the importance of mission. *It is absolutely imperative that you create a guiding mission statement and stick to your stated mission.*

One of the first things we do at Atlas when we meet a new “idea entrepreneur” is ask, “What is your mission?” This not only helps us understand what the organization stands for, but it also gives us a good glimpse of that person’s ability to communicate.

You should be able to quickly convey a compelling mission statement that succinctly describes what your organization does – why does it exist and what does it hope to achieve? Does it clearly explain this in a way that *inspires* others to join you? Does it do so in jargon-free language? Would someone outside our field of work be able to understand it? Does it encourage interest and commitment with your mission?

Not only will the mission statement serve to introduce your work to others, but it will also help you organize your day-to-day operations, and guide you in the selection of your projects. It helps you stay on target! I once heard what I thought was a terrific suggestion -- Print your mission statement on a tent card and keep it prominently on your desk. As you go through your daily activities, constantly ask yourself “does this task or activity help advance our mission?” If you cannot truthfully answer “yes,” then you need to reconsider that project’s relevance.

In the many years that I’ve worked with free market organizations, I’ve noticed two things with regard to missions. First, organizations that are staffed with active and committed people do not necessarily have a good mission statement that accurately reflects what it does. Again, it is important to spend time developing a statement that conveys the reasons you exist and what you hope to accomplish in the future.

Secondly, missions can, and do, change. Wouldn’t it be fabulous if we become so successful at promoting freedom around the world that we can move on to tackling new challenges? Although that’s not likely in the foreseeable future, you might face the opportunity to change your focus or your strategy. If you make changes, reexamine your mission statement to make sure that the fit and description still accurately reflect your work.

Sometimes change happens gradually, and we may not even be aware of it. A new president may come on board with new ideas and new passions. The direction might shift a little, compounded by new donor interests or opportunities. Consequently, it is wise to have your board and staff review your mission statement periodically. Does the mission statement reflect what you do today – or want to do? Does it reach out to your many constituents and maintain direct relevance to your work?

If you research “mission statements,” you’ll find a wealth of information. For example, the Nonprofit FAQ at <http://www.idealists.org> defines a mission statement as “a one-

sentence, clear, concise statement that says who the agency is (the name, that it is a nonprofit, and what type of agency it is), what it does, for whom and where.”

The Center for Business Planning writes: “The mission statement should be a clear and succinct representation of the enterprise's purpose for existence. It should incorporate socially meaningful and measurable criteria addressing concepts such as the moral/ethical position of the enterprise, public image, the target market, products/services, the geographic domain and expectations of growth and profitability.”

BPlans.com defines a mission statement as “a cross between a slogan and an executive summary” and provides the following guidelines for writing a mission statement:

- A mission statement should say who your company is, what you do, what you stand for and why you do it.
- An effective mission statement is best developed with input by all the members of an organization.
- The best mission statements tend to be 3-4 sentences long.
- Avoid saying how great you are, what great quality and what great service you provide.
- Examine other company's mission statements, but make certain your statement is you and not some other company. That is why you should not copy a statement.
- Make sure you actually believe in your mission statement, if you don't, it's a lie, and your customers will soon realize it.

For our think tank work, I suggest you take the time to develop a mission statement that succinctly describes the purpose of your organization or the needs that your organization addresses. If you follow the school of thought that advocates a longer mission statement, you could also include how the organization meets these needs and the principles that guide your activities. Lastly, be sure to periodically review it to be sure that you – and your mission statement – remain on target.

From the Trenches: Stick to Mission

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take only topics on the front burner of your agenda - Elena Leontjeva - Lithuanian Free Market Institute• Established governance rules that prevent the institute from ending up promoting other ideas (i.e. getting off mission), or becoming a simply general-policy-analysis outfit –Andrés Mejía-Vergnaud - Instituto Libertad Y Progreso, Colombia |
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INDEPENDENCE- BE IN THE DRIVERS SEAT; DO NOT LET OTHERS INFLUENCE YOUR THINKING OR ACTIONS

Antony Fisher, Atlas’s founder, adamantly insisted that organizations maintain their independence – from funders, special interest groups, universities, and others who may

wish to control your thoughts and actions. More than five decades after he helped set up the very first institute –the Institute of Economic Affairs in London, it is fascinating to see how this same theme comes up repeatedly among our think tanks.

All of us in the Atlas network share a commitment to a set of philosophical principles – free markets, rule of law, limited government, and property rights. As a free-market think tank, you must be able to defend these principles consistently, regardless of how it might impact your many potential constituents.

By maintaining independence – from corporations, individual donors, trade associations, universities or any other entity that might try to influence your activities-- you retain the ability to speak without interference. Not only does this allow you to promote a consistent message, but it protects your professional integrity. That is, it helps minimize the risks of being viewed as just another “special interest” group. More importantly, it helps you develop your reputation for speaking on behalf of our shared ideas. After all, you want to position yourselves as the “go to” person who can describe the free-market views on any policy topic that comes up.

We all know the alleged pitfalls of accepting restricted corporate contributions. Organizations that accept money from corporations for specific projects or to present certain perspectives, for example, clearly set themselves up to be attacked as “mouthpieces for big business.” This is not an argument to refrain from accepting corporate contributions, but instead, a recommendation to treat these donations as you would any other – as general financial support to advance your stated mission.

I am reminded of a statement made many years ago by a director of a major environmental organization in the US. The director was being accused of taking corporate money, with the insinuation that it was somehow “dirty money.” He responded with one of my favorite fundraising lines: “It may be tainted, but it t’ain’t enough!”

In my opinion, careful governance and guidelines will allow you to determine whether or not the money is “tainted.” More than once, Atlas has made the decision to return corporate money, rather than allow the corporation to dictate some very specific programs.

Corporations are not the only donors that may impact your independence. Seemingly neutral partnerships can go awry. Several institutes in the network, for instance, originally set up their operations within universities. Many found they were eventually compromised by the university’s interests.

Situations may arise in which free market ideas are perceived to threaten specific interests of the universities. For example, a state-supported university would likely frown upon a think tank’s study that questions the role of federal funding for education. (I experienced this type of interference first hand when I once interviewed for a teaching position at a university in a state that benefited from government programs to subsidize cattle grazing rights – they made it clear that my research could not tackle these “sacred cows.”)

When such instances arose, our partners have decided to detach themselves from the universities and establish independent organizations with their own offices, boards of directors, by-laws, and operations. (Note: after accumulating many years experience in this area, we are revisiting the market for think tanks within universities with some exciting encouraging new models. Stay tuned to see how this situation evolves.)

We are in a wonderful position to promote a perspective that is grounded in firm, consistent principles. This allows us to accept unrestricted contributions from a wide variety of sources. In many ways, this is remarkably Librating!

From the Trenches -- Maintain Independence

- Make sure your programs and sponsors do not restrict your choice of topic and methods of action. (Elena Leontjeva - Lithuanian Free Market Institute)

POSITION YOURSELF STRATEGICALLY

To effectively achieve your mission, it is vital that you position yourself strategically.

In other words, as Alberto Mingardi of the Instituto Bruno Leoni in Italy points out below, perform a market analysis to determine your competitive position and your market niche. Do you have a good sense of who your competitors are? Your strategic partners? Your target audiences? Potential coalitions? Major challenges and obstacles?

Conducting market research essentially means gathering the information you need to make decisions about your business, i.e. the business of developing a think tank in order to market the ideas of freedom. Market research is the systematic gathering, recording, and analyzing data relevant to selling the goods and/or services you produce.

Drawing from the for-profit world, I found a marketing analysis questionnaire at http://www.va-interactive.com/inbusiness/editorial/sales/ibt/market_analysis.html#1 that provides a useful breakdown of the process.

It poses questions that help enhance your understanding and knowledge of your target market and industry, and ultimately help you determine if there is a need for your product or services?

- What defined market am I trying to reach?
- What specific companies are servicing this market?
- Are they successful?
- Are there other companies servicing this market with a similar product?
- Are they successful?
- What is their market share?
- Is the market saturated or wide open? If so, why?

- What is the size of the market?
- Is it a growing market?
- Is the industry stable, volatile, growing or trendy?
- How can I reach this market?
- How do my competitors reach the market?
- What are the business models of my competitors?
- What do customers expect from this type of product or service?
- What core competencies must the product or service have?
- What are customers willing to pay for this type of product or service?
- What is my competitive advantage?

In the end, if you perform a thorough market analysis, you'll wind up with a good sense of:

- 1) Whether or not there is a market for your think tank, with the mission you've set out.
- 2) The type of marketing plan you will need, and
- 3) The type of market information you'll need to help you develop your organization.

<p>From the Trenches -- Position Yourself Strategically</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify your competitors, their donors, their products, and look for a market niche. Copy efficiency, learn from their mistakes. • Be involved in the political discourse as much as you can without being associated with any party; start organizing conferences with politicians as discussants, but always one from the right and one from the left. • Be aware of focusing too much attention on international projects; realize that, no matter how fascinating they are, your country comes first. • Do brand building thru specialization; work in your market niche. (Alberto Mingardi – Istituto Bruno Leoni, Italy) • I would also add in our special situation that there should be an effort to cultivate the moderate elements in the other side. We are regular commentators on CBC – the Canadian version of PBS for example. (Peter Holle – Frontier Center, Canada)

FOCUS ON RESULTS

There is a tendency among our partners to engage in “wheel spinning” in two major ways that detract from the ability to deliver action and results: 1) talking to each other instead of actively reaching out to those who do not currently share our thinking, and 2) believing

that we are reaching “people” because we are engaged in a flurry of activity (my favorite -- posting articles on a websites and believing that web hits are a significant measure of *impact*.)

In the comments “From the Trenches” below, Elena Leontjeva points out some outstanding suggestions. For one, she reminds us to “know our audience by consciously focusing on target audiences, aims, and goals.”

From the Trenches -- Focus on Results, not Activity

- Be innovative and result-oriented in search of the instruments for your action. Never do conferences because everybody does them - only do it when you come to understand that at a certain point of time a public gathering will be the best way to disseminate, debate, etc. You can call it "conference" when dealing with others, but when dealing with yourself always call it a "gathering of target audience A, B and C with the aim of presenting your D and E and with the goal of achieving your X, Y and Z. Always think about the result of every stage that you plan. See your action plan as a chain of results. Every stage is good if it brings value-added to the whole undertaking.
- Do not "*TRY*" doing things, just *DO* them. Prohibit the word "*TRY*" at your institute. It is just one word, but see how it changes the spirit of your people. It brings you success.
- *Do it!* (Elena Leontjeva - Lithuanian Free Market Institute)

CREATE RELATIONSHIPS WITH INFLUENTIAL OPINION-LEADERS AND BE SURE THEY RECEIVE YOUR PRODUCTS (but also cast a wide net)

This is a longer way of saying -- Market yourself!! Build the relationships and take the actions necessary to get your message into the hands of those who will in turn, serve as messengers. Always be on the look out for Hayek’s “Second hand dealers in ideas.” (If you haven’t read *The Intellectuals and Socialism* by F.A. Hayek, now is the time, my friend.)

Relating back to my earlier comments about your mission statement – have you developed a Mission Statement to inspire commitment? In relation to your Market Analysis, have you developed a subsequent plan of action, or a strategic plan, that involves reaching key people?

As the many contributors to this article point out, one important challenge is to create relationships with influential opinion-leaders in your community.

At the Leadership Conference sponsored by the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, President Lawrence Reed explains how he courted the editorial page writers of all the state’s newspapers. He put himself on a yearlong schedule to make sure that he took

each one out to lunch and introduced them to the mission, vision, and activities of the center.

Let me also add that we want to cast the biggest net imaginable when promoting our ideas. Sometimes, this means reaching out to very unlikely partners. The IEA's general director, John Blundell, is a master at relationship building. I learned this first hand when we worked together at the Institute for Humane Studies in the 1980s. He took every opportunity to engage people that he met on a daily basis. As a result, I can recall meeting his real estate agent, travel agent, and even his dentist, as well as other vendors at Institute for Humane Studies luncheons. There, they heard leading speakers on classical liberal ideas. One of the travel agents, who became Atlas's agent for some time, even attended a workshop Atlas held in Florida! Over the years, he grew more and more curious to learn more about what we did. He saw the energy level of the organization and wanted to be a part of it. That's what we want to achieve with all we come in contact with. (Even though John moved to the UK in 1992, several staffers still use the dentist he introduced us to – now that's relationship building!

On my way to a State Policy Network meeting one year, I caught a taxi from the airport. When the cab driver asked me why I was visiting Colorado, I mentioned that I was attending a conference of state-based think tanks, including the Independence Institute. The cab driver immediately smiled and said "I listen to its president, Jon Caldara, on the radio when I'm driving! I don't agree with everything he says, but he comes up with some interesting ideas." Now that's a terrific example of reaching out to unlikely people. You can never tell who might become a conveyor of our ideas.

As you develop your list of opinion-leaders – which might include politicians, journalists, judges, professors, business leaders, ask yourself: are you actively marketing your programs and products to them? Is there an even wider net you can cast?

The Property and Environment Research Center in Montana, has specific programs designed to teach free market environmental ideas to federal judges, journalists, and professors, as well as mainstream environmentalists (people who traditionally are very opposed to free market ideas). They take advantage of their beautiful mountain location and offer that as an incentive to participate in the programs. Countless people who might not otherwise have been exposed to free-market ideas are now actively working in them, thanks to the programs. (As a word of caution, they have also received criticism in the mainstream media for so-called attempts to influence judicial thinking.)

Likewise, the New Economic School in Tbilisi, Georgia, has programs geared towards selected strategic targets – students, journalists and judges. Its influence has grown to the point that students from Azerbaijan and Armenia now attend their programs. Now that's a ripple effect!

Concerned that marketing is one of our industry's weaknesses, the Templeton Foundation worked with Atlas to create a specific competition that rewards outstanding marketing and public relations. All winners of the 2004-2006 Templeton Freedom Award prizes

were qualified to compete for a second prize, the Templeton Freedom Prize for Initiative in Public Relations. The competition spurred the think tanks to reach beyond their traditional processes and look more aggressively at marketing methods.

The Center for Entrepreneurship and Economic Development (CEED), the 2005 award winner, engaged in outreach and marketing to make sure that opinion leaders “of all stripes and colors” received their information. Its director, Petar Ivanovic wrote:

“We actively created a greater public awareness of CEED’s role in the community as we launched some of our new products and reached new audiences. Through this opportunity, we learned new things and better understood how to work with the media. We also taught them about liberal ideas and increase common understanding. As it is written in CEED’s mission, we exist in order to “promote and practically implement the ideas of a free market, entrepreneurship, and private ownership in an open and democratic society based on the rule of law.”

Talk about creative energy: In cooperation with the Montenegrin Tennis Association and few other organizations, CEED supported an outreach program called “Everyone Playing Tennis” which targeted pupils in second and third grade of primary schools in two cities of Montenegro. Within a period of two weeks, about 1,200 pupils visited tennis courts and practiced tennis for at least one hour and a half. CEED Program Director Ms. Dragana Radevic used this opportunity to share some copies of a CEED publication “My Business” which targets that age group as a new generation of prospective entrepreneurs. She delivered short presentations to the children about the content of the publication “My Business” – a booklet designed for primary school kids to teach them about entrepreneurship – and raised their interest to read the book. This effort not only promoted CEED and its activities as an organization, but hopefully, ensures future clients – a key part of its long-term strategy.

As this CEED example shows, when you focus on creative ways to reach new audiences, the sky is the limit. (Many of you may relate to the method employed by our friends at the Hayek Institute in Slovakia – they offer free beer to university students who attend certain programs!) The key is to reach not only today’s opinion leaders, but tomorrow’s as well.

From the Trenches: Build strong personal relationships

- **With Media:**

- We worked very hard to build personal relationships with the media and enjoyed good coverage as a result, even if most journalists were not sympathetic to our message. (Brian Crowley -Atlantic Institute for Market Studies, Canada)
- Spend money on lunches with journalists; become a source and a friend to them. (Alberto Mingardi – Istituto Bruno Leoni, Italy)
- Create a free newspaper column that is pithy and timely. We sent ours to weekly and local papers that needed content. This single item was

extensively edited and rewritten; quality content sells itself. (Peter Holle – Frontier Center, Canada)

- Make a major effort to get your columns into national papers - we were helped by the launch of the *National Post*, a national paper that was free-market oriented and liked our stuff. Our columns were picked up by the *Wall Street Journal* three times - perhaps as high as you can go in the free market community - it helped put us on the map. (Peter Holle – Frontier Center, Canada)

• **With Opinion leaders:**

- Put together the best mailing list you can. Your work exists only as much as people are aware of it. (Alberto Mingardi – Instituto Bruno Leoni, Italy)
- Build a network of people, particularly scholars interested in writing on specific policy issues from the perspective of liberty, and develop the capacity to contribute opinion-editorials on behalf of the Liberty Institute to the media. (Barun Mitra - Liberty Institute, India, Liberty Institute, India)

• **With other Think Tankers:**

- Put think tank leaders and journalists on a simple email list. (Peter Holle – Frontier Center, Canada)
- Attend Atlas's Liberty Forum and Mackinac Center for Public Policy's Leadership Development workshops on Think tank operations – these are critically important from knowledge and networking position. (Peter Holle – Frontier Center, Canada)
- Network with other think tanks and write about their research and work (don't reinvent the wheel) in a simple, man-on-the-street format. (Peter Holle – Frontier Center, Canada)
- Create separate e-mail lists: a local e-mail list, and an international e-mail list. We used whatever input we could take advantage of to make the list grow. For example, we included addresses that came in e-mails sent to us. (Andrés Mejía-Vergnaud - Instituto Libertad Y Progreso, Colombia)
- Contact free-market institutes and like-minded people all over the world. This helped us in many ways: ideas, experiences, networks, and the mere fact that locally you gain reputation just for having many smart friends abroad. (Andrés Mejía-Vergnaud - Instituto Libertad Y Progreso, Colombia)
- Stay in touch with Atlas and attend one of its international workshops (this amounted to a quantum leap) (Andrés Mejía-Vergnaud - Instituto Libertad Y Progreso, Colombia)
- Tap the international network of freedom oriented scholars and think tanks, mostly for intellectual material, with the help of Atlas Economic Research Foundation. (Barun Mitra - Liberty Institute, India)

Marketing and Publishing

Books, Publishing, and “not” publishing

- Speak in Jargon-Free, Clear Language: Let only texts that are sparkling and clear-cut go out of your borders. Remember, that *"if people do not understand you, that's your fault"*. (In fact, Elena Leontjeva suggests that we all adopt this attitude as a “principle for your soul and mind,” for it drives us to improve ourselves instead of putting blame elsewhere.)
- Design a publication (via e-mail), thinking primarily about the reading habits of the target group. These might vary from one country to another, and what works in Denmark might not work in Colombia. (Andrés Mejía-Vergnaud - Instituto Libertad Y Progreso, Colombia)
- Produce opinion editorials on the role of free markets in providing solutions to developmental and environmental issues. (Barun Mitra - Liberty Institute, India)
- Request and collect freedom-oriented books and literature from think tanks around the world, and exhibited these at book fairs in India. The books serve as an invitation to scholars and activists to join us in this intellectual odyssey. (Barun Mitra - Liberty Institute, India)
- Write a short monograph – The Atlantic Institute for Market Studies published a short monograph, *Looking the Gift Horse in the Mouth*, on the region's biggest public policy challenge (that the huge government presence in the region politicizes the economy, inflates the region's costs and leads people and businesses to look to government support rather than to their own abilities) and challenged the conventional wisdom on this subject. (Brian Crowley - Atlantic Institute for Market Studies, Canada)
- Build an internet site with news and updates that leads people to revisit. It also can serve as a tool to develop a subscriber list: people provided their contact information, including e-mail address, which is then included in the e-mail list. (Andrés Mejía-Vergnaud - Instituto Libertad Y Progreso, Colombia)
- Invest in website - we don't do hard copies, all materials are electronic. (Peter Holle – Frontier Center, Canada)
- Go real. Publish BOOKS and PAPERS. Articles, although important are not enough. (Alberto Mingardi – Instituto Bruno Leoni, Italy)
- Start a blog: I started 2 blogs of my political writings:
<http://funwithgovernment.blogspot.com>, and
<http://hayekreader.blogspot.com> (Nonoy Oplas, Minimalist Government, Philippines)

FUNDRAISING

Now we come to the area that represents one of the biggest challenges for most think tanks. If you have done your market analysis, established a clear mission, come up with a plan to conduct your operations, you have basically created a fundraising plan. But, how do you actually get the money in the door?

Perhaps the best words of fundraising advice I can give in a short summary is to look at fundraising as a long-term process of relationship building. Think about it as an opportunity to build friendships with people who share your interests.

We believe in the importance of promoting freedom. We believe free markets, rule of law and limited government provide the best institutions to promote opportunity and prosperity for all. The fundraising challenge is to find the people who we can share this opportunity with.

Consequently, don't adopt an apologetic attitude when you approach a potential donor. Go to them with the enthusiasm that your work deserves. After all, if they really believe in your mission, you are giving them an opportunity to help make that a reality. That is a great gift!

Do you know what the number one reason that explains why people don't give? It's so simple you'll laugh when you hear it. It is because *they are not asked*. My advice to you is:

- Look for opportunities to develop a widespread donor base – stop looking for the US's golden list of 10 top conservative donors!! (Oh, if I had a nickel for every time I received this request, I could fund the entire movement....)
- Take the time to explore the universe of donors in your region and/or related to your niche. Don't always assume the fundraising is better somewhere else.
- Develop personal relationships with those people; invite them to your events, find out what they are interested in, send them information on those interests; remember their personal habits (birthdays, children, etc.)
- Most of all treat them as you would like to be treated. The moment you start thinking of donors as automatons, or widgets, you lose that personal touch.

At Atlas, we've recently had encouraging success in focusing in building relationships with our donors – something we had neglected for many, many years. John Blundell recommended a fabulous book called "Relationship Fundraising" by Ken Burnett. If you're not familiar with it, I'd highly recommend it. Take its message to heart and find ways to reach out to as many donors as possible. Make sure you're calling to thank them for their contributions. Send them articles that relate to conversations you've had. Treat them as the friends that they are.

Hit the Ground Running! -- Fundraising

- Ask each of the institute's close friends and board members to contribute in whatever way they can. It is important to establish a commitment or contribution of some sort from them. They can be involved as donors, authors, etc. (Andrés Mejía-Vergnaud - Instituto Libertad Y Progreso, Colombia)
- Ask donors to organize high-end private dinners in honor of your organization. This was instrumental in the early efforts at the Montreal Economic Institute. The dinners frequently featured a prestigious speaker (we once had Steve Forbes, for example). These dinners provided the opportunity to make a sales pitch. If possible, have an outsider make the pitch too, setting the stage for you to elaborate. (Michel Kelly Gagnon, formerly with the Montreal Economic Institute, Canada)
- Start working with donors on single projects and later on, ask them to support the institute permanently. We found it paid off to prove the institute's reliability and efficiency before asking for considerable sums of money. (Alberto Mingardi – Instituto Bruno Leoni, Italy)
- Write letters to friends asking them to contribute. This worked for Minimalist Government, which got a number of positive replies and small contributions. (Nonoy Oplas, Minimalist Government, Philippines)
- Put together a powerful board that signaled strong community support and fundraising seriousness. (Brian Crowley, Atlantic Institute for Market Studies, Canada)

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE ATLAS NETWORK

Atlas serves as a connector and a catalyst. We will never have enough money or staff to do what we want so we have to use our dollars, time, and human capital wisely. The easiest way is to tap into each other and learn from each other.

If a product you are contemplating has already been done, ask if you can reprint, borrow, or otherwise imitate that product. In most cases, people will want you to take their work and market it to your audiences. Most of the organizations in our network will freely grant permission for you to take their work (some will give you the PDF file!) and put it in a format that serves your market, provided you attribute the appropriate credit.

Two of Lawrence Reed's articles have been reprinted by countless organizations – “Seven Principles of Sound Public Policy” and “Investing in Ideas.” Likewise, *Common Sense Economics: What Everyone Should Know about Wealth and Prosperity*” by James Gwartney et. al. has been translated into so many languages that I've lost count. (Indeed, the Korean version is on the recommended reading list of all new Samsung employees, thanks to the translation and marketing efforts of our friends at the Korean Center for Free Enterprise.)

So, if you have a “new” idea for a book, project, or program, check with others. Chances are it’s not as new as you thought. Learn from the network, adapt what’s out there...and just get to it! If you don’t know where to start, Atlas is always a good place to begin.

Hit the Ground Running! -- Ideas to Jump Start your Organization

- Organize a major conference on a topic of great interest (local government reform) to an important part of the community and market it extensively. (Atlas helped by paying for a group of think tank leaders to attend). We made good money and raised our profile across the region, because everybody's got a local government and nobody thinks theirs works well! (Brian Crowley - Atlantic Institute for Market Studies, Canada)
- Bring in very prominent international speakers with great messages and get a big sponsor for the event. Atlantic Institute for Market Studies leveraged a successful event with Sir Roger Douglas from New Zealand. (Brian Crowley - Atlantic Institute for Market Studies, Canada)
- We took some long shots on inviting high profile speaking guests and struck gold (i.e. The former Irish prime minister; Andrei Illarionov, former advisor to Russian president Putin; Indianapolis Union leader). This helped develop our reputation for hosting cutting-edge thinkers. (Peter Holle – Frontier Center, Canada)
- One of the very best things I did was to get a prominent, respected personality to speak at my event. When Lawrence Reed, president and founder of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy traveled to Kenya and delivered a series of lectures, he opened a floodgate of opportunities. People started to inquire about IREN – what is this institute that attracts a prestigious speaker from so far away? (James Shikwati – Inter Region Economic Network, Kenya)

PARTING COMMENTS

I hope these ideas and comments are encouraging and inspirational to you. They represent just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the wealth of knowledge that is abundantly available in the Atlas network of free-market institutes.

In the pages that follow, you will find reprints of talks delivered over the years at Atlas events, as well as broader network events. If you see something you like, please contact the author. I’m confident it will open up an enlightening conversation, leading to more opportunities for you to advance liberty.

Good luck, friends!